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Clinton takes fight to his accusers

Martin Kettle and Ed Vulliamy in Washington

AN ANGRY Bill Clinton on Monday dared his accusers to do their worst, challenging them to prove their allegations of sexual misconduct or back off.

Taking the offensive after several days of stunned silence over the swirling claims that he seduced Monica Lewinsky, a 24-year-old former White House intern, and then encouraged her to lie about their alleged affair, Mr Clinton delivered a terse and powerful denial.

But in another dramatic development on Monday, Ms Lewinsky's lawyer emerged from a day-long meeting with his client and the special investigator, Kenneth Starr, with an announcement that could set the stage for a deal whereby she would defy the president and retract her denial of an affair.

Ms Lewinsky's team has told Mr Starr she would tell her whole story on oath in exchange for immunity from prosecution for perjury. That story is now in Mr Starr's hands, with a formal offer to strike the deal.

Her lawyer, William Ginsburg, emerged from his meeting to catch the White House by surprise. He said that Ms Lewinsky had made "a complete proffer" — or summary of what she would say to a grand jury — to Mr Starr, and that "he has indicated he will consider it . . . The ball is totally in Starr's court".

A grand jury was due to hear testimony from Ms Lewinsky on Tuesday. She had planned to plead the fifth amendment and remain silent if no deal had been done. However, sources said an application to have the jury delayed was likely to be accepted, fuelling speculation that a deal crippling to the president was about to be made.

Earlier, the president, live on television, had unequivocally denied any affair. "I want you to listen to me, I'm going to say this again," Mr Clinton, with his wife Hillary at his side, told an invited White House audience. "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky. I never told anybody to lie, not a single time, never. These allegations are false and I need to go back to work for the American people."

Mr Clinton briefly looked close to tears as he emphasised every word of his short statement with a jab of the finger. The president allowed no questions from reporters and offered no details. White House sources said it could be weeks before Mr Clinton gives any details, confirming signs that the president has decided to play a long game. The burden of proof is now on his accusers, led by Mr Starr.

In a move which emphasised the Clinton camp's apparent determination to try to stake out the high ground, the president's lawyer, Bob Bennett, filed an application in Little Rock, Arkansas, to have the date of Paula Jones's civil law sexual harassment suit against the president brought forward from its May 27 start.

Mr Bennett said that the move was necessary because the gagging order imposed on witnesses was being undermined, and because the supreme court's confidence in a ruling last year "that this case could proceed without undue distraction to the nation's business" was unfounded.

Mrs Clinton underlined her central role in the strategy by fronting Monday's White House "media event". She gave television interviews on ABC and NBC on Tuesday, stoutly defending her husband, hours before Mr Clinton was due to give his State of the Union speech before both Houses of Congress in Washington.

A Gallup poll and one for ABC showed Mr Clinton's approval rating stable at 58 and 59 per cent respectively. But the Los Angeles Times had him as low as 48 per cent.

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Clinton's betrayal, page 23


Monica Lewinsky: seeking a deal

The Pen is mightier than the Sword...

Crazies of right go for kill

THEY communicate on the Internet, by video and on shortwave radio. They fight their battles in the courtroom, not the polling station. For five years they have been convinced Bill Clinton is a liar, a cheat, a drug-dealer and even a murderer, *writes Jonathan Freedland*.

They have been dismissed as the Clinton Crazies. But now the Enemies of Bill, huddled together on the far right of United States politics, smell blood.

That is certainly how defenders of the president see it. For them these past few turbulent days represent the culmination of an extreme rightwing conspiracy to remove Mr Clinton from office.

Besides serial adultery, they believe he took cash bribes while governor of Arkansas; that he allowed the Mena airstrip in the west of the state to be used for cocaine shipments; that he has snorted coke and smoked dope inside the Oval Office; that he has paid off countless supporters; and that his wife Hillary has enjoyed lesbian trysts with her longtime adviser, Susan Thomases.

Most striking is the claim, circulated on websites and in samizdat newsletters, that Mr Clinton and his henchmen are to blame for the murder of 56 associates or witnesses whose mistake was to know too much. At the centre of the Clinton-haters' universe is the death in 1993 of the White House deputy counsel, Vince Foster. No conspiracist believes it was a simple suicide.

The key force in this anti-Clinton movement is the underground media that has gathered strength since the president took office, led by the bigmouth of talk radio, the ultra-conservative Rush Limbaugh.

Paula Jones is pressing her sexual harassment claim against the president — the case which brought Monica Lewinsky to light — through the Rader, Campbell law firm, specialists in the defence of violent anti-abortion protesters. And Ms Jones's legal bill is being paid by the Rutherford Foundation, a pressure group for Christian fundamentalism which is also funding the legal defence of a former member of the American Nazi party.

Drug company donates $1.6 bn to defeat tropical disease

Chris Mihill

A BRITISH company is to donate $1.6 billion over the next 20 years to supply free drugs to a fifth of the world's population in a bid to wipe out the crippling tropical disease of elephantiasis. It is the biggest such donation by a British company.

The disease affects 120 million people, but some 1.1 billion are at risk of contracting it, and it is this vast population that will be targeted in the new programme.

A drug made by SmithKline Beecham (SKB) called albendazole is 99 per cent effective in combating the worm-like parasites that cause the illness if given in combination with other anti-parasitic drugs. Patients need one tablet a year over a four- to five-year period to kill the parasite.

The disease, also known as lymphatic filariasis, causes huge swellings to the limbs and genitals and damages internal organs such as the kidneys and lungs. Apart from the pain and suffering, the severe disfigurement it causes brings psychological problems. In some communities sufferers are shunned.

The illness also has enormous economic and social consequences, because of health bills and lost productivity. In India, where a third of sufferers live, elephantiasis is estimated to cost $1.5 billion a year.

In all, the condition affects 73 countries, in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and South America.

In partnership with the World Health Organisation, SKB plans to give away some 6 billion tablets over the next 20 years to treat all those at risk. The cost of the drugs alone is put at $800 million, with a further $800 million coming in distribution costs and health education programmes.

Kazem Behbehani, of the World Health Organisation, said that the hope was that by 2020 lymphatic filariasis would have been eliminated as a public health problem. "Even 10 years ago no one would have dared to believe lymphatic filariasis would become a target for elimination. We at the WHO look forward to the day, 20 years from now or earlier, when lymphatic filariasis joins smallpox as part of medical history."

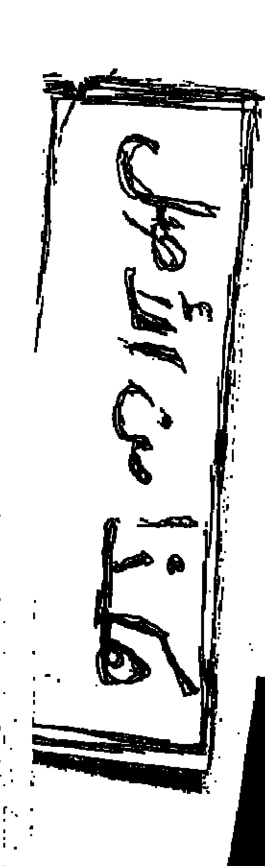
Jan Leschley, chief executive of SKB, said: "We will donate albendazole free until this dreadful disease is eliminated as a public health problem."

James Hill, director of corporate affairs for SKB, said the company was donating the drug as part of its corporate philosophy to help communities in which it worked and traded. It was also seen as a more meaningful way to celebrate the millennium than building monuments.

The three drugs used to treat elephantiasis are out of patent and individually cost less than 15 cents each. Although SKB may lose turnover of some $80 million a year over 20 years, this is seen as a small price to pay for the humanitarian kudos it will garner.

The disease is caused by thread-like worms that lodge in the lymph system and release millions of microscopic larvae into the bloodstream. These can be picked up and passed on to others by mosquitoes. Albendazole kills or sterilises the adult worms, while the other two drugs attack the larvae.

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80



Saints blame sinners for end of Asia's miracle

THE meltdown of Asia's "miracle economies" has given rise to some perplexity. How could all of these economies, which had "the fundamentals right", suddenly collapse together overnight? Since the unregulated international financial system that caused these failures cannot be wrong, the fault must be the simultaneous and sudden sin of the economies involved. But people are beginning to disbelieve this fairy tale.

For just as the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is being negotiated to open all the economies of the OECD countries still further to these deluges of unregulated money flows, the miracle economies themselves lie bleeding on the floor.

So what does the International Monetary Fund do to correct the failing system as it careens across continents from Mexico to eastern Europe and now Asia, leaving broken societies in its wake? It leads a publicly funded rescue package to lend ever more billions to keep the hot money going — more than $100 billion at last count.

But make no mistake, It is not Indonesia or South Korea or Malaysia or any other country that is now being "bailed out" by this bottomless pit of emergency loans. It is this ruinously deregulated financial system itself and, more directly, the loan capital of international banks which stand to lose big from unpaid interest and debts if the money is not kept churning to them by the injection of countless billions into drained national accounts.

It is the foreign banks and creditors that lent the money who are in fact being bailed out. All that is being received by these mortally wounded societies is massive new debt to keep paying their external creditors back, along with a large dose of more financial deregulation to colonise their economies further. By the end of the year, these formerly self-governed societies of Southeast Asia will have their entire economies on the block for bargain-basement purchase by foreign multinationals, and still more exposure to foreign capital flight,

At some point, the world's public, who are paying for this stripping of their societies to enrich the high-volume and velocity flood of deregulated money around the globe, will awake from the nightmare imposed upon them by this mindless model of "market freedom". My bet is that we are beginning to already.
John McMurtry,
University of Guelph, Canada

JIM HOAGLAND, writing an "opinion" about the Asian economic crisis (Sharing the blame for Asian crisis, January 18), continues the Christian cultural dichotomy of Good and Bad. He claims: "It is now clear that many South Koreans, Thais and Indonesians took the money and ran."

While this may be the case in rare instances, the column does not contain the kind of economic analysis normally applied when White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (Wasp) businessmen borrow too much money to build plants worldwide for markets that are not there. When Wasps borrow beyond belief to build plant and equipment to produce products for unemployed consumers who do not have the disposable income to purchase the glut of products, it is called poor strategic planning and nothing more; yet when Asian tigers do the same thing they are branded as thieves.

Mr Hoagland appears to be so blinded by perceptions of a Yellow Peril that he fails to perform a cogent analysis. Rather then a professional reporter, he appears more at ease as a sermonising Calvinist clergyman.
Michael Hogan,
Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Bully boys won't get their way

MARTIN WALKER'S comment — "Britain gets the sticky job of chairing the meetings at which Greece will have to be bullied into being less intractable over Turkey" (January 4) — manages in one sentence to show a lamentable lack of knowledge on two points.

I believe it is fairly well-known that Greece is not alone when insisting that Turkey comply to the same criteria as other would-be European Union members. Germany has made this point very clearly, while Italy, a strong supporter of Turkish membership, has again brought up the problem of human rights in Turkey as it relates to EU membership.

On the second point, as Mr Walker thinks bullying is still an appropriate British approach to a less powerful country, perhaps he also believes that Greece can be bullied. Hardly consistent with historical fact. Mussolini tried it in 1940 and was chased back well into Albania by the Greeks, who were the first to inflict defeat on a fascist army.

The Germans invaded with superior forces, but the Greeks continued to fight, sabotaging trains carrying men and arms for the North African front. Only recently the British ambassador to Greece presented a Greek widow with a replacement for a stolen Kings Medal for Courage awarded to her husband, who "was personally responsible for 16 successful attacks" and was involved in "40 distinct sabotages of German trains". He was not alone.

If Mr Walker wishes to bully (bluster, browbeat, hector, intimidate or swagger) he will need to find a new victim.
Beryl Biggin,
Athens, Greece

Let's hear it from Canada

I HAVE always been a little perplexed by the lack of significant coverage of events in Canada, the second-largest country in the world. The occasional article culled from the Washington Post or Le Monde seems to manage to squeeze through, but roughly only two or three times a year.

I find it staggering that in your January 18 issue what has rapidly been dubbed here Ices Storm 98 receives only the most cursory of coverage. Did no one stop to think of the incredible nature of this disaster? Or was it because it occurred in that bland non-land of the Great White North.

I would guess that the disaster affected an area larger than England, from Kingston, through Ottawa to Montreal and Quebec. The devastation here in the Rideau Lakes area is awesome, and the struggles of hydro, telephone workers, ambulance, police, fire services, the army and municipal politicians to cope with a disaster, described as the greatest and most expensive natural disaster in Canadian history, are truly heroic.

Try to imagine the whole of rural England, except for lucky isolated pockets and some towns, plunged into darkness within two or three days and with the temperatures dropping to minus 12C — even during the day at times. Then imagine that outside help is only available from as far away as Scotland and France while the other English cities cannot help because they do not exist. And also remember that the rural population is considerably more widely spaced than in England, hampering the situation further.

The effect was either to cause people to flee to safety with relatives often 500km away, or to fling them suddenly backward to the lifestyles of their great-grandfathers.

Montreal lost three of its four main power lines across the surrounding river, and had the fourth gone down — as I believe was thought to be a good possibility — a total evacuation of the island would have been ordered.

I hope that you will include more truly world coverage in the future rather than deeming minor incidents in France, Britain, the European Union and the United States to be of such great significance as to elbow out such an incredible story.
(Rev) David Townshend,
Westport, Ontario, Canada

IN RESPONSE to the article on the Canadian Senate (January 4) I believe that membership of this body constitutes, as defined best by Professor R H Vincent, a taskless thanks.
Rahul Banerjee,
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Updike deserted by fickle fashion

JOHN UPDIKE has become unfashionable (A roar of defiance against old age, December 28). Perhaps there is justice an it. He was always one of the most fashionable of writers and helped the generation who were young and in the United States cultural orbit in the sixties and seventies to define themselves. He expressed their desire for intimacy, one of the principal forces that drove them.

To the successor generation he represents what they are reacting against and offers a target for their prejudices. His detailed examination of the personal and intimate, which has contributed to the closer terms on which the current generation relate to one another, looks self-indulgent and gratuitous to them. His delight in sex when it was newly set free in the sixties and seventies looks like obsession now. He offends a certain kind of feminist by his refusal to blur the gender divide, and offends the stylists of the eighties and nineties by being uncool.

It is the ordinary phenomenon of one generation succeeding another, but sad nevertheless. Partly this is because it is the burial of what we invented and valued. There is also a sadness for Updike himself. He exposes himself in his writing to a degree that is unusual and that was a necessary part of his appeal. In our pursuit of intimacy our generation dangerously courted vulnerability. Updike's vulnerability is our own and we feel for him.
Ian Hassall,
Auckland, New Zealand

Briefly

YOUR comment on the subject of hungry children (December 28), states: "The problem starts with malnourished women who are pregnant. Low birthweight children will have lower IQs." Unfortunately, the problem is even worse; the unborn child, if a daughter, will already carry a lifetime complement of eggs. A single season of malnutrition may retard the pregnant woman, her daughter, and her grandchildren. This is one reason why a malnourished section of society takes many generations to recover.
Geoff Leet,
Thurso, Caithness

BY COINCIDENCE I read Andrew O'Hagan's lengthy piece (January 4) on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission right after watching the Masterpiece Theatre video on Cecil Rhodes. Although many others were culpable over the past century, I could not help but think this is the fruit of the seeds planted by Rhodes and his accomplices. As in my own country, bitter fruit of such long standing will take even longer to purge from the unfolding present.
G Douglas Nicoll,
McMinnville, Oregon, USA

HOW do you reimburse the tens of thousands of women and children not incarcerated but incinerated at Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Could that have been in the back of the Japanese prime minister's mind when he offered his condolences to "all who suffered in the second world war" (January 18)?
Sam da Vinci,
London

MARTIN KETTLE's review of Paul Simon's fabulously flawed The Capeman is far too negative (January 11). Yes, the play is too long, and if Simon had someone who could tell him "no", several songs would be dropped. But all this pales in comparison to the strong performances and sparkling score. Several members of this delightful troupe could fill soccer stadiums in Latin America. They are certified stars, with voices and charisma to match. Despite the subject — a murderer and his search for redemption — much of the show was almost explosive with joy and rhythm.
Richard Davies,
Hastings, New York

THE Government is to rename our dependent territories as British overseas territories (January 25). Why not go further and grant the territories representation in Westminster? French overseas territories and departments are so represented in their national assembly.
L Freitag,
Harpenden, Hertfordshire

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Neo-Nazi tide sweeps east Germany

Ian Traynor in Berlin

LARGE parts of formerly communist east Germany are becoming virtual no-go areas for foreigners and German "outsiders" as support for racist neo-Nazi ideology, backed by violence, intimidation and clandestine propaganda, grows across the region, say experts, researchers and social workers.

Describing a largely unreported crisis stemming from the east's sudden reunification with the west in 1990 after decades of isolation, Berndt Wagner, an east Berlin criminologist and social worker, said: "To say that one-third of east German youth is now prone to the extreme right is an understatement. The point of no return has already been reached for many. It's very depressing . . . It's getting worse."

Mr Wagner — who has been monitoring the far right for 10 years — and other experts in the field say that overt support and tacit sympathy for extreme rightwing views, particularly among the under-30s, has become the norm in many villages, small towns and urban districts across eastern Germany, reinforcing "social and cultural domination of communities".

He complained that politicians are failing to identify the belated fallout from unification, or to tackle the colossal social problems afflicting the region more than eight years after the Berlin Wall came down. In the view of experts, the neo-Nazi spectre is being enhanced by extensive use of the Internet to campaign for foreigner-free zones.

The authorities in the worst-affected state, Brandenburg, which forms the hinterland to Berlin, last week listed nine regional towns as neo-Nazi centres. They also warned that foreign construction workers were targets for the militants.

Nationally there was a 14 per cent increase in extreme rightwing offences last year, with the proportion considerably higher in the east. The German police put the number of active neo-Nazis at 47,000, a 4.5 per cent increase on the previous year and the first rise in four years.

But that figure represents only the hard core of those prepared to organise and engage in violence. In the east, say clergymen, youth workers, teachers and local officials, much of the population, young and old, is receptive to neo-Nazi ideas, sympathetic to such views, and often tacitly endorsing violence against "outsiders".

"It's not just foreigners. Punks and leftwingers get attacked, not because they're punks but because they're 'un-German'," said Annette Kahane of east Berlin's Centre for Democratic Culture. She was east Berlin's first official commissioner for foreigners after the wall came down.

Brandenburg police last month unveiled a 35-strong special helicopter-borne mobile police unit to combat racist violence. Last year there was one violent racist attack a week in the small state, and 148 xenophobic assaults during the year.

"Foreigners can no longer move freely in eastern Germany," said Ms Kahane. "Normality in east Germany means a curfew for foreigners, also in east Berlin." Recorded attacks on foreigners in east Berlin are about five times higher than in the west of the formerly partitioned city.

The Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Berlin blamed rising unemployment for despair among young Germans.

But the official statistics underplay the scale of the crisis and the ways in which the overall social climate allows for the tacit toleration of racist thuggery.

"We don't categorise feelings of revulsion against foreigners as extreme right," said a Brandenburg police spokesman.

When neo-Nazis stabbed and kicked a 17-year-old youth to death last year in Magdeburg, the capital of neighbouring Saxony-Anhalt, the murder was not categorised as an extreme-right crime.

Almost 9 per cent (7 million) of Germany's population is foreign, but the figure in the east, outside Berlin, is only about 1.5 per cent.

Comment, page 12

Tiger bomb rocks shrine to Buddha

Susie Price in Kandy

AN EXPLOSION at Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist temple in Kandy killed 13 people, including three bombers, and wounded 23 others last Sunday, days before Prince Charles and other foreign dignitaries are due in the city for celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of independence.

The bombers, believed to be Tamil Tigers, drove a lorry through a checkpoint close to the Temple of the Tooth. The lorry exploded outside the temple's entrance, creating a big crater and twisting the temple's metal gates, chipping stonework and damaging the roof.

On Monday the government formally outlawed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The temple's main structure, parts of which were built 300 years ago, remained intact after the bombing. Engineers said the temple's thick walls had protected it.

The army began a clear-up operation watched by visiting Buddhist monks. "We've suffered a lot in this civil war but I never thought they would target the temple," said an old monk.

The crater outside the Temple of the Tooth. The blast killed 13 people PHOTO: ANURUDDHA LOKUHAPURARACHCHI

The temple, known in Sinhalese as Dalada Maligawa, is a site of pilgrimage. Most come to pray outside the inner shrine, which contains a tooth said to have been the Buddha's. It is enclosed in a gold casket and taken out once a year in a procession called the Kandy Perahera. The shrine was untouched by the blast.

Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese community is Buddhist. Kandy is their spiritual and cultural home. The temple is one of the most sensitive sites the Tigers could have chosen.

The attack led to fears of communal violence in Kandy. A group of young men set fire to cars parked in the forecourt of a cultural centre for Hindu Tamils.

The government, which had expected an attempt by the Tigers to sabotage the anniversary celebrations, drafted in thousands of extra troops.

Russia warns US over using force against Iraq

Julian Borger

RUSSIA warned the United States on Monday it would oppose US military action against Iraq, denouncing any use of force as "unacceptable and counterproductive", and dispatched an envoy to Baghdad to try to defuse the crisis over UN weapons inspections.

But a White House spokesman, James Rubin, said Washington remained convinced that time was running out for a diplomatic solution to the weapons stand-off with Iraq. The US, he said, was pessimistic about Moscow being able to persuade Baghdad to comply with UN demands for unfettered weapons inspections.

The sharply worded Russian foreign ministry's statement, apparently responding to US sabre-rattling last weekend, made clear the deep international divisions over how to deal with the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, who is still defying inspectors searching for banned chemical and biological weapons.

"All interested parties have to act in a responsible and balanced manner . . . to ease tensions and normalise the situation in the Gulf," the Russian statement said.

However France, another consistent opponent of military action, showed signs of losing patience with Iraq. President Jacques Chirac said the onus was on Baghdad to avoid military conflict; and that there was nothing presidential about the "presidential sites" from which UN inspectors had been barred.

White House officials announced at the weekend that the US was considering military action against Baghdad "within weeks" if Iraq did not reverse its policy and allow UN inspectors unrestricted access to suspected weapons sites.

In Moscow, the presidential press secretary, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, said Boris Yeltsin was "worried by the development of events" and was sending a deputy foreign minister, Victor Posuvalyuk, to Baghdad immediately as a special envoy.

Asked if he had co-ordinated Russia's intervention with Washington, Mr Yastrzhembsky asked: "Why was that necessary?"

Diplomatic analysts say Moscow sees the Iraqi crisis as an opportunity to recover a voice on the world stage. In November, the foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, defused a similar crisis through emergency diplomacy.

But Russian intervention provided a temporary fix and did not resolve a fundamental dispute about UN access to sites where weapons might be produced or stored.

It was not clear what proposals Mr Posuvalyuk would take with him to Baghdad.

Iraq responded defiantly to the US threat of force. In a front-page editorial on Monday, the ruling Ba'ath party newspaper, Al-Thawra, said: "The Clinton administration is trying to make its aggressive madness louder, and give its threats . . . a dramatic clamour." It added that "this does not frighten our people".

The newspaper repeated Iraqi government taunts that President Clinton would use a military confrontation to divert attention from the sex scandals surrounding him. Even among Washington's closest allies there appears to be growing concern that the scandal and threat of impeachment could undermine US policy towards Iraq.

Mugabe sees 'white conspiracy'

Alex Duval Smith in Harare

ZIMBABWEAN officials last week accused the country's white minority of funding unrest over soaring food prices as soldiers and riot police descended on at least one Harare township and beat apparently innocent residents, using tactics condemned by Amnesty International.

After President Robert Mugabe blamed a "political conspiracy" for riots and looting that spread to the eastern city of Mutare, he ordered an emergency cabinet meeting to set up a ministerial price control panel.

On the third day of protests riot police, augmented by thousands of soldiers using armoured vehicles, helicopters and tear gas, largely succeeded in keeping protesters out of Harare's city centre.

Police said they had arrested 300 people in townships around the capital. Amnesty International reported four unconfirmed deaths since protests began on Monday last week against a 21 per cent rise in the price of maize meal. The rise followed a 24 per cent increase two weeks earlier.

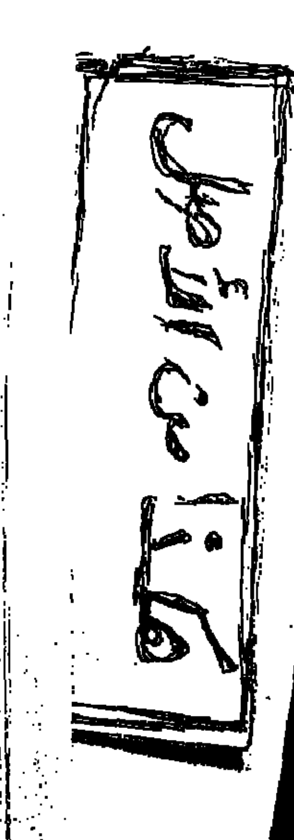
The information minister, Chen Chimutengwende, said recent political events "lead me to believe that white farmers and industrialists are funding the disruption".

The claim was widely dismissed as a desperate attempt to shift the focus from economic mismanagement, which in three months has seen inflation soar and the Zimbabwean dollar plummet.

David Hasluck, whose Commercial Farmers' Union represents 4,000 large-scale farmers who own the best third of Zimbabwe's arable land, said: "The claim is absolute nonsense. White farmers are busy farming."

Petros Nyatsanza, an Anglican priest in Mufakoze township, south-west of Harare, said: "The police and soldiers are brutal . . . They are just intimidating people and do not mind who they pick. Women are being beaten because they cannot run away in time."

Mr Chimutengwende claimed police and troops had intervened only against looters. "These are organised gangs and we have a duty to maintain law and order at all cost."



The Week

THE Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, called for an urgent Arab summit to discuss the deadlocked Middle East peace process as his chief negotiator said direct contacts and trust between the Palestinians and the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, had broken down completely.

Washington Post, page 14

ISRAELI aircraft attacked Hizbullah positions in southern Lebanon after clashes in which two guerrillas were killed and three Israeli soldiers wounded.

THE US government accepted a guilty plea from the Unabomber, Theodore Kaczynski, in exchange for withdrawing the death penalty. The government had earlier rejected any plea bargaining.

Washington Post, page 13

AN END to the nine-year conflict on Papua New Guinea's Bougainville island came closer when the rebels agreed a permanent ceasefire with the government from the beginning of May, as well as an interim truce.

SONIA GANDHI, the widow of assassinated prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, announced she will not stand for election in Amethi, the north Indian constituency that has been the personal fief of her family.

ANGRY unemployment activists stormed the Paris headquarters of the prime minister Lionel Jospin's Socialist party following his refusal to agree to a big increase in benefits for the jobless.

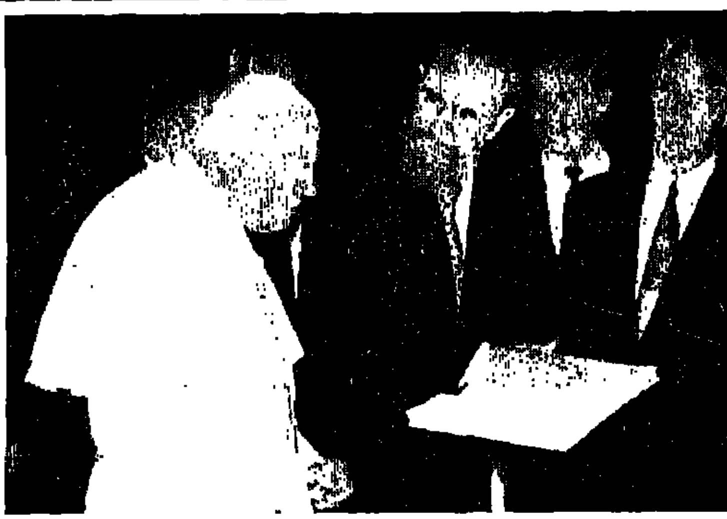
UNPAID soldiers mutinied in the Congolese port of Matadi, looting several houses and forcing people into their homes. Government troops were sent in to quell the trouble.

ELEVEN people died and 23 were injured after a 300-metre wall of snow engulfed a school party hiking in the mountains above the Les Orres ski resort in the French Alps.

FOUR brothers and sisters from Sligo in the Irish Republic are to receive $1.6 million in damages after bringing an unprecedented civil action against their doctor and health board for failing to protect them from 15 years of sexual abuse by their father.

ZEVULUN HAMMER, Israel's deputy prime minister, minister of religious affairs and minister for education and culture, has died aged 62.

IN ONE of the most bizarre drink-drive cases to go before the courts, Ricky Hall, an Australian Outback bushman, has been charged with being drunk in charge of a pair of camels after being stopped while driving a camel cart carrying 12 tourists.



Pope calls for change in Cuba

Phil Gunson in Havana

THE POPE flew back to Rome last Sunday after a unique "pastoral" visit to Cuba, the political consequences of which will continue to be analysed for a long time to come.

Though he stressed his homily at the fourth and final open-air Mass in Havana that the Church did not seek political power, there is little doubt that the visit has substantially enhanced the Church's traditionally marginal role in Cuban society.

An estimated 300,000 people packed the historic Plaza de la Revolución, interrupting the Pope with chanting and applause as he told them that the "spirit of the Lord" had sent him to "proclaim the release of captives and liberty to the oppressed".

His speech, which included calls for change in the Cuban political system and criticism of the prevailing capitalist alternatives, was greeted by President Fidel Castro — seated in the front row — with apparent equanimity.

But there was no doubting the strong desire for change among large sections of the crowd, whose religious chants were interspersed with cries of "Libertad!" and "Long live John Paul — he wants the people free!"

The first clue as to whether the Pope's visit will effect political change may come with the government's response to his call for the release of political prisoners.

At the shrine of St Lazarus last Saturday, the Pope said: "These prisoners of conscience suffer an isolation and a penalty for something for which their own conscience does not condemn them. What they want is to participate actively in life with the opportunity to speak their mind with respect and tolerance.

"I encourage efforts to reintegrate prisoners into society. This is a gesture of high humanity and a seed of reconciliation, a gesture which honours the authority promoting it and strengthens social harmony in the country."

While he was expected to speak out on the issue, he chose a moment that was not broadcast live by state-run media, limiting the impact of his statements inside Cuba.

The government, which denies holding political prisoners, has yet to respond, but many in diplomatic circles believe that some of the estimated 500 to 750 prisoners of conscience will be freed as a gesture of goodwill.

Prominent among them are the four members of the "internal dissidence working group" who were jailed last July for distributing alleged "enemy propaganda", a pamphlet criticising the draft conclusions of the fifth Communist party congress. The four, who include the president of the illegal Social Democratic Party of Cuba, Vladimiro Roca, are still awaiting sentencing.

Carlos Lage, an economic supremo in the ruling circle, said the Pope's appeal would be "given due consideration", although observers doubt there will be any immediate change.

Meanwhile the United States, whose economic embargo against Cuba was criticised by the Pope this week, has said token gestures will not be enough to cause a change in policy.

An official said Washington wants the release of substantial numbers of prisoners — "not just four or five, or 20" — and major steps towards multi-party democracy and a free-market economy.

It may be some time before the Pope's wish that Cuba "should open up to the world, and the world draw close to Cuba" becomes a reality.

Above left, President Castro presents Pope John Paul with an album of photographs on the pontiff's departure from Cuba. Above, part of the crowd that attended the pope's Mass in Havana PHOTO: ROBERTO SCHMIDT

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EU rewards Bosnians who back peace

Martin Walker in Brussels

THE European Union has changed its spending rules to enable it to disburse more than $500 million directly to Bosnian towns and communities that show they support the Dayton peace agreement.

The change, prompted by the EU's frustration at the central Bosnian government's ethnic squabbling and delays, is intended to speed up refugee resettlement. But the EU also hopes to increase its aid to parts of Republika Srpska that are not under the sway of "the radical nationalist opposition of Pale", the EU external relations commissioner Hans van den Broek said.

But, despite the new Republika Srpska government's promise to back the Dayton accords, Mr van den Broek resisted pleas for the EU to pay the salaries of its civil servants.

Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative charged with implementing Dayton, urged Brussels earlier this week "to find the means of providing this new government with direct assistance, as it struggles with a non-existent budget and a state of total corruption".

The reform of EU aid strategy follows claims by some MEPs that endemic corruption was putting up to a third of the aid "into the wrong hands". The EU originally committed $1.1 billion to Bosnia, about half of which has been spent.

Edith Müller, a German Green party MEP who investigated EU aid for the parliament's budgetary control committee, said that although the EU was by far the largest donor to the international aid effort, she was told in Bosnia: "The Americans are good, the World Bank is good, but of the EU we see nothing." She recommended parliament to refuse to endorse the commission's use of the aid funds, a serious step that could lead to a formal inquiry.

The commission is scrambling to improve its performance, sending staff from Brussels to beef up its aid mission in Sarajevo, streamlining its system of tenders for local contracts, and organising a workshop for 450 NGOs to see how they can improve the EU record on the ground.

In its defence, the commission said that difficulties arose because it had to channel funds through the central Bosnian authorities. For example, its attempts to repair telecommunications towers near Pale, an integral part of the Bosnian phone system which was destroyed by Nato bombing, were blocked until it agreed to upgrade the telephone systems in the Bosnian Croat and Muslim regions too.

"In order to get approval on refugee return projects, we had to get agreement from all three representatives of the central authority, and they were not always ready to agree," Mr Van den Broek said.

"They look at this on an ethnic level, so that each gets a piece of the pie. That's the problem we can sidestep, by ensuring now that we can give aid directly to every community and entity that complies with the Dayton accords."

By sidestepping the central authority, however, the EU is implicitly accepting that the core of the Dayton agreement — the need to maintain Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unified state bringing together the three communities — is faltering.

THE SELF-STYLED "Serb Adolf", who was arrested last week by peacekeeping troops in Bosnia, pleaded not guilty in The Hague to crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention and violations of the laws or customs of war.

The Bosnian Serb war-crimes suspect, Goran Jelisic, was arrested by Nato troops and detained in the Bosnian town of Bijeljina before being taken to a United Nations detention centre outside The Hague.

United States soldiers took part in his arrest, along with Dutch, British, German and French forces, US military sources said.

Mr Jelisic, aged 29, was indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal in 1995 for war crimes while commanding a notorious detention camp near the Bosnian town of Brcko in 1992.

He described the charges against him as lies. "These are all lies and fabrications," he told presiding judge Claude Jorda of France in an appearance before the United Nations criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia. *— Agencies*

Indonesian Chinese made scapegoat of crisis

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE CHINESE of the Indonesian archipelago are learning to live with fear again. The anti-Chinese pogroms that visited these islands in the upheavals of the mid-sixties — levelling Glodok, Jakarta's Chinatown — have returned to haunt villages and cities.

They follow a familiar pattern. Last week Kraksan village in East Java was the target, when a crowd attacked shops owned by villagers of Chinese origin. The complaints levelled against the people sometimes called the "Jews of Asia" are that they are to blame for rising prices. Estimates say that Chinese businessmen control as much as 70 per cent of the economy.

Muslims are painting their doors with the words *toko muslim* (Muslim shop) to protect themselves from rioters.

A sense of the growing crisis for the Chinese community — which makes up 5 per cent of the population of 200 million — can be seen in the unprecedented restrictions that the authorities are placing on the celebrations of the lunar new year, the biggest holiday in the Chinese calendar, which began this week.

Street festivities have been banned, as have ceremonies in temples, artistic performances with a Chinese theme and even private parties in hotels. The authorities have threatened to confiscate banners, decorations or printed material related to the forthcoming Year of the Tiger.

"Tougher action than normal is needed this year because of the economic crisis," said Toha Reno of the Jakarta Public Order Office. "People are getting angry over trivial things and riots based on ethnic issues have rocked the country several times in the past year."

In recent weeks towns in east Java have been hit by riots, sparked ostensibly by rising food prices. But the rampaging mobs, as has happened on half a dozen occasions in the past year, quickly targeted Chinese-run properties and businesses.

There are plenty of frustrated Indonesians at present. After enjoying an average annual growth of 7 per cent for the past 30 years, the country is in the grip of an economic crisis, with the rupiah losing 85 per cent of its value in seven months. Add to this last year's drought that destroyed up to 70 per cent of crops, and major forest fires that practically killed off the tourist industry, and Indonesia is in trouble.

Hatred of the Chinese has been embedded since the alleged communist coup against President Sukarno in the sixties. In the crackdown that followed, 500,000 people, many of Chinese descent, were massacred.

Many Chinese, such as the country's richest man, Liem Sioa Liong, and President Suharto's close friend, Mohammed "Bob" Hasan, have made fortunes under the current regime, both through lucrative contracts and simple hard work — and that has fuelled anti-Chinese envy.

● Forest and brush fires have flared up again in Indonesia and are threatening a bigger crisis than last year, when more than 5 million acres were burnt and choking smog spread from Australia to Thailand.

According to an expert monitoring events, global climate conditions and the sequence of events — fires followed by a short wet season and then more fires — are similar to 1982-83, when 7.5 million acres of primary and secondary forest were lost in Kalimantan, at a cost of around $5 billion.

Sri Lankan priest back in the fold

Jonathan Steele

AFTER prolonged criticism from senior Catholics around the world, the Pope has withdrawn his excommunication of Father Tissa Balasuriya, a Sri Lankan priest who described the traditional view of the Virgin Mary as a docile and obedient mother as a "dehydrated" fantasy of male chauvinists.

Fr Tissa was the first priest excommunicated by the Vatican for almost 50 years. Many of his supporters argued that he was victimised because he represents Catholics in a continent where they are a tiny minority.

At a ceremony in Colombo last week the priest, aged 73, made a "statement of reconciliation" before the papal nuncio. It allowed the excommunication, imposed last January, to be lifted immediately. "I didn't accept error or punishment. It was a compromise," Fr Tissa said.

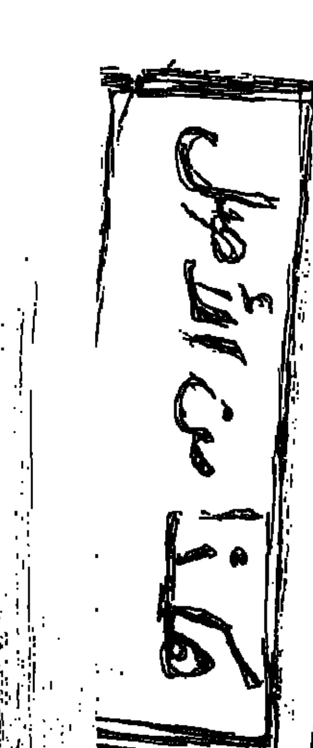
He was not allowed a hearing in Rome, and was asked by the Vatican's doctrinal watchdog, the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, to sign a recantation including a statement denying that women had the right to become priests.

The Vatican's high-handed behaviour outraged numerous bishops, priests, theologians and lay Catholics. The demand for recantation was compared to Stalinism.

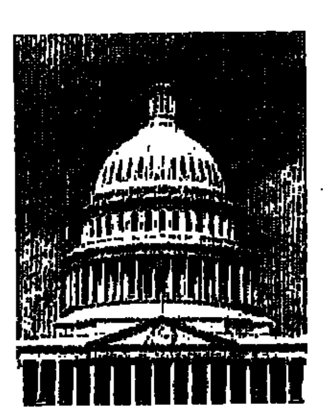
Although they did not all agree with the views expressed in his book Mary And Human Liberation, his supporters said his excommunication was a denial of natural justice after a lifetime in the Church.

Fr Tissa refused to recant but was persuaded to soften his line after Father Marcello Zago, the superior-general of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the monastic order to which he belongs, travelled from Rome for six days of "dialogue and reflection".

In his statement of reconciliation Fr Tissa said he regretted that "serious ambiguities and doctrinal errors were perceived in my writings and provoked negative reactions from other parties". But he said he had hoped for a more open dialogue and an "objective scrutiny" of his book.



Republican hopes riding on Clinton



Washington diary

Martin Kettle

PARTICULARLY from outside the United States, it is hard to imagine why anyone should hate Bill Clinton. Be disappointed in him, perhaps. Be indifferent to him, maybe. Feel that his presidency has been inconsistent or anti-climactic, understandable. But hate him? For most foreign observers, and many Americans too, that isn't easy to believe.

Clinton, after all, always aims to please. He is the embodiment of pragmatic modern consensus politics, a man who appears to believe that all differences can be resolved and solutions found for every problem. He is an optimist. And, as the events of the past week show, he has to be.

That, though, is not the reason why a crucially important and highly voluble segment of US political culture really hates Clinton. The militants and conspiracy theorists of the right — and even many mainstream Republicans — hate him because they think he is an historic interloper, the man who stole the White House from George Bush, the man who should never have got his hands on Ronald Reagan's supposedly golden legacy. It is too crude to say simply that they hated the sixties, and that Clinton embodies everything they now demonise about the generation that would not fight the Vietnam war, but that is certainly a large part of it.

And hate him they do. That is why, from the moment that Clinton had the temerity to defeat an incumbent Republican president, the raggle-taggle of the American right have been out to get him. They would have been out to get anyone else in his position too, but Clinton's personal characteristics long ago transformed their irritation into an obsession, which is fanned by rightwing broadcasters such as Rush Limbaugh and sustained at all hours of the day and night on their astonishing range of Internet sites.

In one sense, therefore, last week was the moment that the right has been working and hoping for. For at last their elusive quarry has been run to earth. Between them, the Whitewater independent prosecutor Kenneth Starr, the Paula Jones sexual harassment campaign, a media spasm and the president's apparently uncontrollable lust have finally combined to place Clinton's continued presidency in the hands of Monica Lewinsky. By last weekend, the 41st president of the United States was cornered, and his future was dependent upon the deal that Starr is able to strike with Lewinsky's lawyer, William Ginsburg.

And yet one thing can be said with some confidence amid so much fast-moving unpredictability. Whatever else happens in this dramatic crisis, Clinton is most unlikely to become the only US president of the 20th century to be impeached.

This is an irony, given the intensity of the hatred for Clinton on the right and the almost messianic determination of several of those involved in these matters to see him drummed out of the White House. It seems to fly in the face of the engagement of the rightwing Rutherford Institute in refloating the Jones case last year, or of the central role played in the Lewinsky case by the vengeful New York "literary agent" Lucianne Goldberg, who long ago spied on George McGovern's doomed 1972 campaign and was paid for her work by Richard Nixon's re-election campaign which, like Clinton in one of the Lewinsky tapes, was also known as "Creep".



Amid many echoes of the Watergate years last week, it is common to encounter people shaking their heads at the possibility that Clinton might soon join Nixon as the presidential black sheep of the late 20th century. They need not worry.

The reason Clinton will not be impeached can be expressed in two words — Albert Gore. Impeachment may seem like a fitting apotheosis to the long hounding of Clinton, and the Republicans may possess the necessary majorities in the House of Representatives to bring the proceedings and in the Senate to complete them, but the plain fact is that, under the US constitution, the impeachment of Clinton would simply hand the presidency to the vice-president. And since neither the sexual sleaze nor the alleged obstruction of justice that would have combined to bring Clinton down can in any sense be said to implicate Gore, the Republicans would simply be conferring the mantle of incumbency upon the man they have to beat in 2000 to regain the White House, which they think of as rightfully theirs.

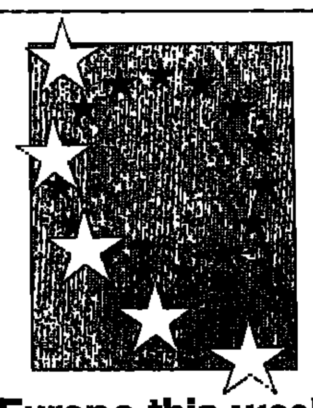
That would be a very risky move to make, to put it mildly. Yet if this is a correct conclusion, it must also follow that it is not in Republican interests for Clinton to resign either, since that would produce the same effect — a Gore presidency. This perhaps explains the remarkable distance that even the most combatively anti-Clinton Republican strategists have put between themselves and any calls for the president to go. In an extraordinary week, few contributions were more remarkable than Newt Gingrich's exceptionally cool injunction to his party to slow down, watch and wait upon events before jumping to any conclusions.

Indeed, it is striking that many of the suggestions of impeachment or resignation have come not from Republicans but Democrats. This is partly because many Democrats feel little loyalty to Clinton personally, believing that he has abandoned the policies and values of the party. But that is not the whole explanation for his lack of defenders. In reality the politicians who have envisaged the end of the Clinton presidency have been former aides, such as Dee Dee Myers, George Stephanopoulos and Leon Panetta (as well as a number of current staff who, so far, refuse to speak on the record). It is the Democrats who see advantage in Clinton's departure, not the Republicans.

For the Republicans, a damaged Clinton who remains in office is much more valuable than a discredited Clinton who quits the scene. The Republicans may talk as though the Clinton presidency is one of the great abominations of the age, but they would soon find they missed not having Bill Clinton to kick around. The last thing they really want is for Gore to move into the White House, and for this November's mid-term elections to be fought out in the midst of a Gore honeymoon and an upsurge of public guilt and sympathy towards a too harshly treated Clinton. It really would be an irony if the great Clinton sex crisis turned out to be the key to what otherwise seems highly improbable this year — the electoral recovery of the Democratic party.

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In foreign policy, the EU speaks as 15



Europe this week

Martin Walker

THOSE IN Washington who have expressed the wish — like the member states who solemnly signed the Amsterdam treaty last year — that the European Union develop a common foreign and security policy, may have had second thoughts last week. The European Commission endorsed a controversial new policy drafted by its vice-president and commissioner for Mediterranean affairs, Manuel Marin.

Mr Marin has been busy. No sooner had he launched his blunt paper on the Middle East peace process — which demanded an equal place at all talks with the United States and warned that EU aid would end unless Israel stopped blockading the Palestinian economy — than he flew off to Algeria with the "Troika". The Troika comprises the foreign ministers of the past, present and next EU countries to hold the presidency of the European Council, which Britain currently chairs.

The Troika's first ride with Britain in the driver's seat was little more than a chance to show the EU flag and express concern. There was little opportunity for any serious negotiation with an Algerian government which insists that internal security is its own affair. Despite Algeria's presence across the Mediterranean, and France's traditional concern for a former colony that is an important source of natural gas, Europe's lack of influence over policies to stop the Algerian bloodbath is altogether striking. Europe dreads the prospect of an Islamic fundamentalist neighbour, and after the latest furore provoked by fewer than 2,000 Kurdish asylum-seekers, it is even more nervous of a possible flood of Muslim refugees.

But Europe's fear of unrest among its neighbours appears to be in almost inverse proportion to the EU's ability to do anything about it, largely because a common European foreign policy remains almost a contradiction in terms. The first time it was tried, amid sonorous French statements that "the hour of Europe is at hand", was the utterly disastrous attempt to stop the Balkan wars from breaking out, and then from getting out of hand. Europe's failure was then cruelly emphasised when the US wearily entered the arena to exercise its traditional leadership.

Since then, it has not been easy to find any corroborating evidence of that common foreign and security policy that was solemnly established as one of Europe's guiding principles in the Amsterdam treaty. In Iraq, Britain sticks loyally by Washington's insistence on maintaining United Nations sanctions, while France seeks to have them softened sufficiently for a series of discreetly negotiated trade deals to come into force. In Iran, Europe first withdrew its ambassadors in outrage at a German court verdict which found Tehran guilty of collusion with terrorism, and then sent them back, uncomfortably close to the signing of an oil deal by France's Total group.

In part, Europe's diplomatic divisions stem from the implications of the transatlantic alliance. Four EU members (Ireland, Austria, Finland and Sweden) are traditionally neutral and outside the Nato club. France is, at best, semi-attached. And Britain stills acts as though the cardinal principle of foreign policy is to buttress the Atlantic alliance. But the divisions stem also from the long-standing ties and interests of nation states. In the Balkan crisis, German partiality for Croatia and the Anglo-French sensitivities to Serbia dated back to a pre-1914 Europe.

The strongest tie holding EU diplomacy together is money. By far the world's biggest aid donor (more than $6.5 billion annually), Europe is also by far the biggest bankroller of the peace process in Bosnia and the Middle East, and of aid and investment to Russia and eastern Europe. And with $360 billion outstanding, its banks have more exposure to the current Asian financial crisis than Japanese and US banks together.

This brings us to Mr Marin's Middle East plan. As the supplier of more than half of all aid funds to the Palestinians since the 1993 Washington donors' conference, the EU is throwing down a challenge to both Israel and the US by its threat to withhold aid, which is likely to buttress Israeli claims that the EU is partial to the Arab side.

Mr Marin argued that the failure of the Israeli-Palestinian talks was now "contaminating" the EU's other objectives in the region, undermining its EU-Mediterranean agreements and its policy dialogue with North African countries. Moreover the EU's efforts to develop the Palestinian economy had been so frustrated by the failure of a political settlement and by Israeli security measures that "all Palestinian economic indicators point to a clear deterioration of living standards, with per capita GDP down by over one-third".

The result was "widespread international donor fatigue". As it was by far the biggest donor, the Commission proposed a series of conditions to be met before the EU agreed to continue its aid programme, which runs out later this year. The most controversial condition is for an end to the security measures imposed by Israel to seal off Palestinian territories, along with a demand that "the Palestinians must have open trade access to the outside world including Israel".

The EU's latest bid for a big international role risks trouble with Washington. This puts Britain in an awkward position, as current holder of the EU presidency. British officials suggested that Mr Marin had been "freelancing", and Britain's Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, fresh from his trip to Washington, is likely to play for time at the EU foreign ministers' meeting this week. In their frustration with Israel, most EU members tend to sympathise with the proposal, as does the European Parliament. But neither sympathy nor money add up to a common foreign policy.

Australia fights battles of the past

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

THE HARBOUR was a spectacle with 70 tall ships and firework displays for the Australia Day celebrations here on Monday, but visitors would have been hard pressed to find any reference to the country's colonial and convict era.

It was the 210th anniversary of the arrival from Britain of the 11 ships of the first fleet which, under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, dropped anchor in Sydney Cove after 251 days at sea. But in moves that some branded as a rewriting of history the traditional re-enactments of the landing were abandoned in favour of less controversial, if less colourful, defining moments in Australian history, such as federation in 1901.

"Phillip is *persona non grata*, the first fleet is a dirty word, you don't want to know about the convicts, and if you're British watch out. Punch a pom!" was the summing up by Jonathon King, a Sydney historian.

The authorities decided that images of British redcoat soldiers are no longer appropriate because they are not "inclusive". Moreover the story is irrelevant to most migrants and offensive to many Aborigines, whose tribes were devastated by disease and an undeclared bush war, they say. There are even moves to dump Australia Day, which some Aborigines call "invasion day", in favour of the date on which Australia will eventually dump the Queen as head of state.

"The day that we celebrate as Australia Day in my view should be the day that we establish this nation as a republic, as a free independent country in all respects with its own head of state," said the chairman of the New South Wales Australia Day Council, Barrie Unsworth. "Clearly, 26 January has outlived its purpose."

As a result the national holiday, which some say is just about "snags [sausages] and flags", has become enmeshed in some of the thorniest issues of current Australian life: multiculturalism, reconciliation with Aborigines and constitutional change.

The subtle rebadging of Australia Day began after the storm caused by the 1988 bicentennial re-enactment of the first fleet's voyage from Portsmouth to Sydney. Dr King, who is a direct descendant of an early governor, led the fleet into the harbour, despite official objections.

"What sort of generation are we going to produce in the schools year after year if we teach our kids that they should be ashamed of the way their nation was founded? Any nation which tries to rewrite its history is in for big trouble," he said.

Meanwhile Aborigines and their supporters held their annual survival concert at Bondi, and the Australians for Native Title group, which supports Aboriginal land rights, launched a national "Sorry Book" to give others the chance to record personal apologies "for the past wrongs done to indigenous people". The Museum of Sydney is running a competition "to design a flag that represents and unites all Australians".

Such events are symptomatic of the national mood of change that could come to a head with the Constitutional Convention in Canberra next week, which is expected to pave the way to republicanism.

The convention follows a voluntary postal ballot late last year in which the republican candidates scored 57 per cent of first-preference votes against the monarchists' 34 per cent. Despite the margin, the outcome is far from clear. Although 76 delegates were elected, the rest were appointed by the federal government and their voting preferences are not known.

The republican camp is also deeply divided on how far-reaching the reforms should be, what model of republic should be put forward, and how any future president should be elected — by the people or by the parliament.

Tan Lee, named Young Australian of the Year last week, is a 20-year-old Vietnamese-born refugee who was honoured for her community work. She is a committed republican.

So is Unsworth, whose father was from Lancashire. He was the Labour premier of New South Wales when Prince Charles and Princess Diana came to Sydney for the bicentennial celebrations. He believes that although Australians should be proud of their history they must also look to the future because of the increasing proportion of migrants in the population of 20 million.

"Everyone wants to celebrate a national day," he said. "Unfortunately for us, we are celebrating a day which for a very significant group in the community, the indigenous people, is a day of invasion. We have to come to terms with that."

But opera and jazz singer Maroochy Barambah said the transported convicts were just as much "victims" of history as the blacks. "I feel that one day Australia Day will include most people. I think a lot of people don't think it includes them at the moment," she said.



James Cook's legacy hangs like a shadow over an Australia seeking reconciliation

King cotton reaps a tragic harvest in Indian fields

Suzanne Goldenberg in Warangal district

THE women of the village held their vigil by the corpse — pitiful thin bones wrapped in rough cotton and laid on a bed of straw — and watched the sun dying. The funeral would begin at dusk.

The man from the state agriculture department took the measure of the dead man's existence on a scrap of paper: Yellaiah Golconda, of Kagilvai village, a farmer in his mid-50s whose suicide left a son to be educated, a betrothed daughter to be married, debts of 45,000 rupees ($1,150).

Golconda was the 26th cotton farmer to commit suicide in Warangal district in the past two months. In Andhra Pradesh state, the total is more than 50. Like most others, he died a slow, agonising death after swallowing pesticide.

But the real killer was cotton. Introduced 20 years ago to Warangal, the cash crop promised profits so glittering that farmers called it "white gold". More than 250,000 acres in Warangal are now under cotton, nearly a quarter of all the arable land. Though most holdings are just two or three acres, they represent the marginal farmers' hopes of breaking free of subsistence.

But in the past four years cotton has lost its lustre. Unlike tobacco, cotton has no government price support. Increased yields drove prices down and the crop was prone to pestilence and disease.

But the farmers were stubborn. They used fertilisers and pesticides in doses that the manufacturers could never have imagined. Merchants gave them the poisons on credit and extracted interest rates of as high as 36 per cent.

Their way of life was already precarious when calamity struck in November: *Spodoptera litura*, a fat caterpillar about an inch long that attacks in darkness.

Farmers were so terrified by the caterpillars that they sprayed their fields with toxic chemicals every other day, instead of the two recommended doses a season. They also got their wives and children to roll pellets of the chemical Methomyl into jaggery and rice bran to make them more enticing to the insects. The farmers, most of them illiterate, used no protective clothing or other safety measures.

L Jalapathi Rao, the research station's director, said that more than 200,000 litres of Methomyl had been sold in the district since November. The average farmer had spent about 6,000 rupees an acre on it.

It did not work. The caterpillars became resistant and, when they had eaten the cotton, they attacked pulses and vegetables, leaving farmers with the prospect of no income at all.

But for the forthcoming general elections, the cotton suicides would probably have gone unremarked. The state government led by Chandrababu Naidu has been stung by the criticism that it has left the farmers to their despair. In December Mr Naidu promised 100,000 rupees to each dead man's family. His critics say that he has merely turned the farmers' misery into election fodder.

Recently the government said it was asking for more funds from New Delhi to add to the 400 million rupees it has allocated for respraying, to ward off a new outbreak, and to keep farmers afloat until harvesting ends in March.

But Dr Rao believes that the caterpillars could have been contained if the government had intervened earlier, by teaching farmers non-chemical pest-control methods and by persuading them to diversify.

But not even Dr Rao, who expects further devastation, can envisage a livelihood for local farmers entirely without cotton. "Cotton has to stay ... but farmers have to change their way of cultivating," he said.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Straw chosen to buff New Labour's image

AFTER only eight months in office Tony Blair has ordered a relaunch of the New Labour image, headed by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, a moderniser in the Blair mould now being hailed by Downing Street as "one of the all-round big hitters".

Although Mr Straw remains outside the "big four" circle — Mr Blair, Gordon Brown (Chancellor), Robin Cook (Foreign Secretary) and John Prescott (Deputy Prime Minister) — he is fast emerging as another of Mr Blair's right-hand men and has been chosen to accompany the Prime Minister on his forthcoming visit to Washington.

Mr Blair told the Cabinet it had lost its edge and said some ministers had become sidetracked by events. This reflected his irritation over media interest in Mr Cook's love life, in alleged strained relations between him and Mr Brown over the Labour leadership, and in the proposal of "affluence tests" floated by the Social Security Secretary, Harriet Harman, in the debate on welfare reforms.

Mr Straw will spearhead a programme of speeches and interviews intended to remind the public of what Mr Blair calls "the big picture" — a "modernised" society, a one-nation Britain with extended opportunities, but one in which rights are balanced with responsibilities.

BEING "Mr Clean" in the House of Commons is a risky business. Martin Bell, the TV reporter who became the Independent MP for Knutsford, discovered this to his cost when he was accused of failing to record, in his election expenses' return, a legal bill for £9,400 about which he knew nothing.

Mr Bell hit the headlines last year when he ousted the disgraced Tory MP, Neil Hamilton, who was at the centre of the cash-for-questions affair. Labour and the Liberal Democrats withdrew from the contest and threw their weight behind Mr Bell, who turned a 22,000 Tory majority into an 11,000 majority for himself.

The intention was that Mr Bell should stand as an anti-corruption candidate but, faced with a blizzard of legal threats from Mr Hamilton, he was advised — he thought by Labour and Lib-Dem backroom officials — to campaign simply as an independent. Unknown to him the advice had come from a City law firm, which billed the two parties.

The revelation in a Labour tabloid newspaper that the legal bill did not feature in Mr Bell's expenses statement prompted Mr Hamilton to crow that his successor was "not Mr Clean but Mr Slightly Soiled".

The source of this item, however, was thought to be Labour, demonstrating its annoyance at Mr Bell's parliamentary question last year after Tony Blair had backed away from a ban on tobacco sponsorship in Formula One racing. "Have we slain one dragon only to have another take its place with a red rose in its mouth?" he asked after it emerged that the boss of Formula One, Bernie Ecclestone, had donated £1 million to Labour's election fund.

Mr Bell, while insisting that he has done nothing wrong, will repay £9,400 to the two parties for advice he thought had been free.

GEOFFREY ROBINSON, a Treasury minister, was cleared by Parliament's standards watchdog of breaking House of Commons rules by not declaring his family interest in a multi-million pound tax-free offshore trust.

But Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, rebuked Mr Robinson, the Paymaster-General, for not consulting him on whether he should have registered it. Had he done so, Sir Gordon would have recommended that the interest should be declared under a discretionary clause in the Commons rule book.

It was, in his view, a "mistake" for the minister to have relied on advice from his professional advisers. The Labour party took a more simplistic view of the ruling. A spokesman declared that the minister had been "exonerated and cleared".

RUPERT ALLASON, spy writer, former Tory MP and a serial libel litigant who has won 22 out of the 23 actions he has brought, came unstuck when a jury decided he had not been defamed when described jokingly as "a conniving little shit".

The makers of a BBC satirical TV programme, "Have I Got News For You", claimed that the offending comment (in a companion book to the show) was meant to be a joke. The jury agreed and Mr Allason will be £50,000 the poorer.

Meanwhile Alan Clark, Tory MP, former minister and racy political diarist, fared rather better when he persuaded a court to order the London Evening Standard to withdraw a spoof column called "Alan Clark's Secret Political Diary" which, he said, had caused him "huge personal embarrassment".

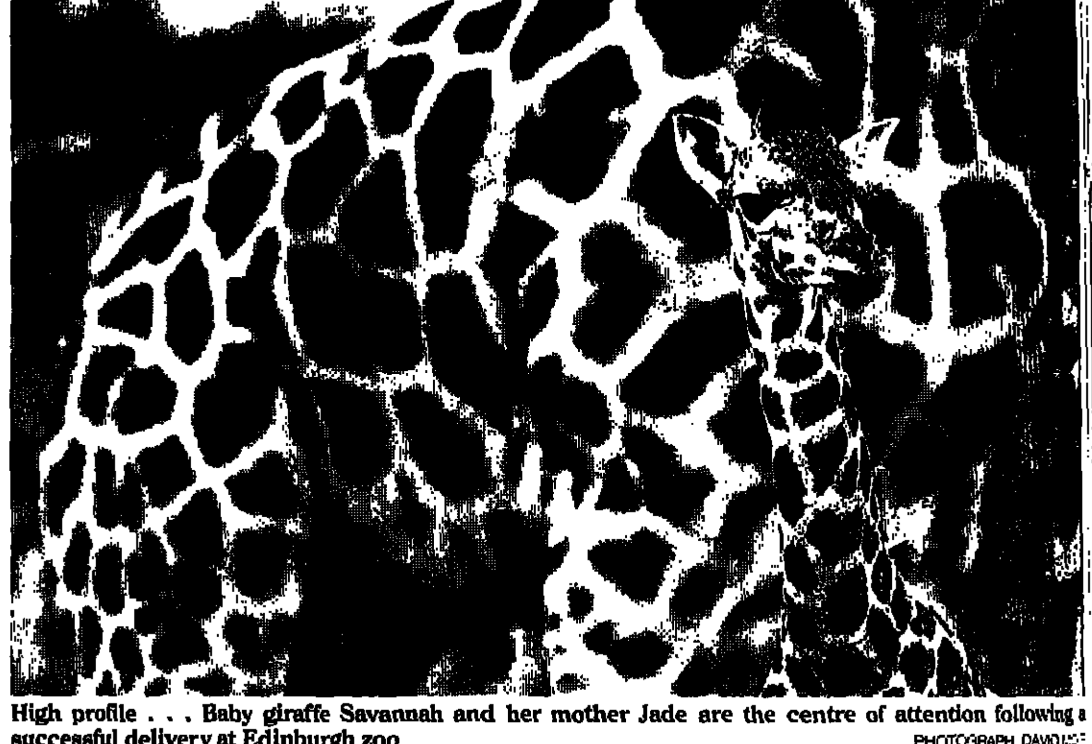
EARL SPENCER, brother of Diana, Princess of Wales, who proposes to charge visitors £9.50 to see her grave at the family home, Althorp Park, is also planning a concert in her memory. He hopes to sell 15,000 tickets at an "accessible" price.

As others clambered aboard the Diana bandwagon — a former equerry, Patrick Jephson, is writing a book and a company is planning a Diana scratchcard — the princess's family approved a logo, a purple signature, to distinguish between official and unauthorised memorabilia.

Austin

TRY TO WRITE SOMETHING THAT WOULD LIBEL RUPERT ALLASON.

Creative Writing



High profile . . . Baby giraffe Savannah and her mother Jade are the centre of attention following a successful delivery at Edinburgh zoo PHOTOGRAPH DAVID [illegible]

Miners win historic claim

Seumas Milne

THE Government faces a likely bill of more than £1 billion, the largest industrial injury payout in legal history, after the High Court awarded damages last week to six former miners with crippling bronchitis and emphysema caused by coal dust.

More than 100,000 former colliers with the condition are now expected to claim compensation from the now-defunct British Coal after a judgment which ended the longest-running industrial injury action. The hearing began in October 1996 and ran for most of last year.

The Energy Minister, John Battle, said the Government accepted its responsibility for the lung disease suffered by former pitmen and would "deal promptly with valid claims" for what was a distressing condition. His department immediately contacted the former miners' solicitors and unions to discuss how to streamline claims.

Mr Justice Turner said the six out of eight former pitmen whose cases he had accepted — and who he had awarded between £3,200 and £10,500 for pain and suffering — were the "tip of the iceberg". Compensation for loss of earnings and medical care will be made in February.

The judge found that British Coal, and the National Coal Board before it, had been negligent in failing to take reasonable steps to minimise coal dust, which had been found to trigger bronchitis and emphysema. The compensation payouts were reduced to take account of the parallel effects of smoking.

The new government already has to carry the £100 million-plus cost of another landmark industrial injury judgment in favour of former miners — last September's High Court damages awarded to sufferers of "vibration white finger". The industrial injury payouts are expected to eat up the entire proceeds from the sale of British Coal's huge land portfolio — and the Government will very likely be dipping into the surplus from the miners' pension funds creamed off by its predecessor.

Bleddyn Hancock, general secretary of the South Wales branch of the pit deputies union Nacods, which backed the bronchitis and emphysema cases, said he was overjoyed by the judgment. The miners had been engaged in a David and Goliath struggle which had "dragged out this legal battle while sick miners have died off".

The National Union of Mineworkers' president, Arthur Scargill, bitterly attacked those who had resisted taking legal responsibility for the condition of many redundant miners.

Tom Jones, of the solicitors Thompsons, which brought one of last week's test cases, said there were "some at the top levels of British Coal who should hang their head in shame at this judgment", and warned mining communities that "all sorts of vultures" would now be offering advice, while raking off some of the compensation for themselves.

Many of those who registered cases have died while the marathon legal battle has proceeded, but their families will still be able to benefit.

● After years of official denials, indifference and foot-dragging, the Government has admitted that dockyard workers who serviced nuclear submarines may have contracted cancer from radiation exposure due to breaches of safety standards.

Comment, page 12

Schools minister slips up on his times-table

John Carvel

STEPHEN BYERS, the education minister who made his name by hammering under-performance in schools, was last week nursing bruised pride after getting his sums wrong in a broadcast to launch the Government's drive to improve numeracy.

The catch question came during an interview on BBC radio. The presenter, Eleanor Oldroyd, asked him: "What is seven times eight?" He answered: 54.

When Ms Oldroyd pointed out that the correct answer was 56, he said: "Well, there you go. It just shows my age. I had been using my times-tables all morning."

Mr Byers recovered gracefully at a subsequent press conference when journalists unsuccessfully attempted to trap the Education Secretary, David Blunkett. After a couple of seconds' hesitation, Mr Blunkett correctly calculated that nine eights are 72.

"As the Secretary of State said, I must do better. I will be spending 45 minutes tomorrow going through my times-tables," Mr Byers said.

It was the second entrapment of the school standards minister in three weeks. He was also photographed in front of a blackboard on which the misspelt "under-achievment" appeared. But that mistake was understood to have been the work of a journalist.

A spokesman said Mr Blair considered Mr Byers "an excellent minister" and the miscalculation was "one of those character-forming events".

Mr Byers was announcing a programme to raise standards of numeracy in primary schools. Teachers will be retrained in new techniques of whole-class teaching, emphasising mental arithmetic and banning calculators for children under eight.

The proposals came in a report from the Government's numeracy task force, headed by David Reynolds, professor of education at Newcastle university. "I get very exasperated about headlines saying we are going back to the basics," he said. "We aren't going back to anything. We want a blend of different approaches that will suit different schools."

The report recommends that teachers should "engage" each child through high-quality questioning instead of allowing groups of children to proceed at their own pace with worksheets.

£10m settlement ends docks dispute

Seumas Milne

TWO years, three months and 29 days after they were sacked for refusing to cross a picket line, 300 Liverpool dockers on Monday voted to end their marathon dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC) and accept a £28,000 pay-off for each worker.

The £10 million settlement — a variant of the package the sacked dockers voted overwhelmingly to reject by postal ballot three months ago — was accepted by a margin of four to one on a show of hands.

The company, which is part-owned by the Government, had insisted last October that its offer was final and would not be reopened. But this week the MDHC said it had responded to an approach from the Transport and General Workers' Union.

The settlement payment will also be made to the families of those who have died during the dispute, and the company has agreed that the dockers — along with the 80 former employees of Torside, whose sacking over a casual labour dispute sparked the original 1995 walkout — will be considered for any job vacancies in the port.

That is a step back from the company's earlier offer of a guarantee of 40 jobs, but not one considered significant by the dockers' leaders, for whom the vote signals a climbdown from their longstanding refusal to consider anything less than reinstatement. Pressure from the company on the dockers' pension arrangements is understood to have been one of the factors leading to a change of heart.

The deal brings to an end a dispute which attracted international industrial solidarity — against ships and lines using the port of Liverpool in Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere — on a larger scale than anything since the 1984-5 miners' strike.

From the first day that the 329 dockers were locked out for supporting their 80 fellow Torside workers, picketing was continuous, and the dispute became a symbol of resistance to casualisation and labour flexibility on employers' terms.

The campaign for the Liverpool dockers, while winning little concrete industrial backing in Britain, attracted the fund-raising support of playwrights, comedians and musicians, including Noel Gallagher of Oasis, and comedians Lee Hurst, Jo Brand and Rob Newman.

Last March, Liverpool footballers Robbie Fowler and Steve McManaman got into trouble with the Football Association after revealing T-shirts backing the dockers during a European Cup Winners' Cup match.

Throughout the dispute, there have been tensions between the dockers and the leadership of the TGWU, which technically did not support it because the original walkout was illegal, but donated about £700,000 to the dockers' hardship fund.

Now the focus for those fighting sackings of strikers, which would be illegal in most European countries, will pass to other disputes, such as the 18-month lock-out of 300 workers at Magnet Kitchens.

Hall berates arts funding

Dan Glaister

SIR PETER HALL, the veteran theatre director, last week received a standing ovation from leading figures in the arts when he launched a ferocious attack on the Goverument's "ridiculous" funding of the arts.

At the same event a year ago Tony Blair, then leader of the Opposition, received an ecstatic response from a similar audience when he outlined Labour's commitment to the arts.

Speaking at an awards ceremony attended by the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, and the chairman-elect of the Arts Council, Gerry Robinson, Sir Peter, aged 67, said: "I know both political parties are excellent supporters of the arts when they are in opposition.

"Come the dawn, what has happened? A cut in the Arts Council grant. Why? It saves tuppence. It's going to ruin a number of small theatres and dance companies. What is the point, minister? Is it to assure Tory voters that you won't be soft of the arts? It won't do."

Continuing to rapturous applause, Sir Peter said: "I am a Labour man, but I'm a very worried Labour man today. The talent that has been celebrated here today is worth keeping. Couldn't we say to ourselves, Are we proud of that? If we want it, can we not say that we will support it?"

Sir Peter, former head of the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, finished to a standing ovation from the audience, gathered for the South Bank Show awards in which he collected an award for outstanding achievement.

Mr Smith said afterwards: "I listened with great interest and excitement to what Sir Peter said. It was well and passionately said. We haven't been able to do everything we wanted to do overnight. I am acutely aware of the financial strains many arts organisations are facing in the coming year."

One example of the squeeze on arts funding was confirmed when the Greenwich Theatre in southeast London lost its £191,000 grant from the London Arts Board. The cut means that the theatre will close at the end of March.



Catholics and Protestants join the cortège at the funeral of Ben Hughes, a Catholic father of three murdered last week, allegedly by the Ulster Freedom Fighters, who are represented by the UDP PHOTO: KELVIN BOYES

UDP walks out of peace talks

Ewen MacAskill and John Mullin

FEARS of more loyalist sectarian killings were raised again on Monday after the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), linked to the paramilitaries responsible for at least three of the recent murders of Catholics, walked out of the Northern Ireland talks in London, pre-empting a humiliating expulsion.

The UDP leader, Gary McMichael, issued a chilling warning that the party's absence would "fuel instability in Northern Ireland". He said that the peace process was becoming "rockier and rockier and rockier".

The Government was reluctant to see the UDP go, despite the clear violation of the Mitchell principles, which commit participants in the talks to non-violence.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, was afraid that without the UDP in the talks, the paramilitary Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) would feel let off the leash. The UDP speaks for the UFF.

Mr McMichael said he felt the UDP was victimised for trying to use its influence on terrorists. "We are being treated exactly the same way as we would be had we sat on our hands and done nothing," he said.

But he promised to return from London to Northern Ireland to try to prevent this, saying he wanted eventually to rejoin the talks. There were signs that the UDP would be allowed back within six weeks if the UFF kept to its ceasefire. The UFF halted its recent campaign on Friday last week, although two loyalist murders of Catholics since have been unclaimed.

Monica McWilliams, a north Belfast nationalist and head of Northern Ireland's Women's Coalition, described the UDP withdrawal as a "disaster". She knew three of the 10 terrorist victims killed in the past four weeks. She said: "The UDP offered an analysis that deserved to be heard."

The row over the UDP swamped the opening day of the three-day peace talks at Lancaster House. Discussion had to be postponed of a joint document put forward by the British and Irish governments covering the awkward issue of establishing a council representing the north and south of Ireland.

Mr McMichael and his colleagues realised their fate in the morning session, in which Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and the Alliance party indicated that they should be thrown out.

There had been a hardening of attitudes over the weekend. Sinn Fein's approach was unexpected. Had the UDP been allowed to stay, it would have been impossible to remove Sinn Fein if the IRA were to call off its ceasefire.

Although most participants believe that the UDP leadership is genuinely committed to peace, the only support for its continued presence came from the Progressive Unionist Party, the other small loyalist parties linked to paramilitaries, the Women's Coalition, and the Northern Ireland Labour Party.

Mr McMichael decided to jump before being pushed: "We believe that we are dealing with a *fait accompli*. We are not going to sit in the plenary session . . . to have ourselves humiliated in such a fashion."

He believed the UFF ceasefire called last week had been maintained and that it had not been responsible for the weekend's violence. He claimed it was unfair to throw his party out of the talks, because the UFF had adopted an "honourable position" in admitting to the killings, whereas others were in the talks while their paramilitaries carried out killings but denied it. He added: "We may be walking out of here, but we will never turn our backs on dialogue."

The British and Irish governments announced that the UDP would have been kicked out anyway. However, they indicated that officials would continue to deal with the UDP.

In Brief

LORD BINGHAM, the Lord Chief Justice, told judges to explain how long criminals will spend behind bars when they pass sentence, and to outline both the period of supervision after release and the period during which offenders can be recalled to jail. The directive was issued to meet the Government's desire to end public confusion over sentencing practice.

THE beef industry launched a £2 million "buy British" advertising campaign in the face of rising imports and bad publicity.

NURSING is facing its worst recruitment crisis for 25 years and the number entering the profession is at its lowest ever, according to a report by the Royal College of Nursing.

Pay squeeze, page 10

THE health minister Alan Milburn promised that hit squads similar to those going into failing schools are to be sent into hospitals that are performing badly. The teams will include clinicians and managers.

MPs may soon be able to address each other as mere "Members" without using labels such as "the Right Honourable and Learned Gentleman" as part of a series of modernisations to be introduced in July.

THE GAP is widening between the time people wait for an operation on the National Health Service and the time they wait if they pay to go private, according to a report by Nottingham university. Patients now wait almost six times as long for an NHS bypass procedure as for one done privately, and 10 times as long for a cataract removal.

BRITAIN ranks at an abstemious 19th in the international league table of drinkers. Top was Luxembourg, with 11.8 litres of pure alcohol consumed per person per year, second was Portugal (11.2), third was France (11.1). The average Briton consumes 7.6 litres.

THE Queen Mother, aged 97, was described as comfortable after undergoing a hip replacement operation following a fall while inspecting horses at the Sandringham Stud.

NIGEL MANSELL, the former Formula One motor racing champion, was banned from driving for six months and fined £400 for speeding.

CHAIM BERMANT, the novelist and outspoken columnist for the Jewish Chronicle, has died aged 68.

VICTOR PASMORE, the artist who personified the century's dogged trek from naturalism to modernism, has died aged 89.

Public sector faces pay squeeze

Michael White and Seumas Milne

GORDON Brown is poised to squeeze this year's pay settlement for more than a million doctors, nurses, teachers and other public sector workers as part of his drive to keep the Government within Tory-inherited spending limits.

In keeping with his "Iron Chancellor" stance, Mr Brown is expected to follow Kenneth Clarke's established precedent — despite the post-election hopes of Labour-supporting trade unions — and save cash by phasing pay awards in two stages, one at the beginning of April and one in October.

But to the relief of public service unions — who have been concerned he might not apply the awards to the 40 per cent of NHS workers not covered by the review bodies — he is also planning to even out increases between competing groups.

The annual reports of the public sector pay review bodies, which the Cabinet was expected to receive this week, are understood to have recommended settlements just above the headline rate of inflation, currently 3.7 per cent — although problems of "recruitment and retention", growing throughout the public services, are said to have produced higher recommended figures for the armed forces.

Treasury sources deny reports that the review body groups will all get 2.5 per cent from April 1, with a top-up to the recommended figure in the autumn. That was Mr Clarke's policy. In keeping with Mr Brown's pre-election line, the policy is likely to be one of equal misery, underpinned by requirements to demonstrate efficiency and productivity gains.

So long as Mr Brown ensures the pay review awards apply across the health service workforce — and that there are sweeteners in the form of greater job security — the unions are likely to stomach the staging of the increases.

The Government has powerful leverage over the trade unions in the form of its planned legislation on the right to union recognition where more than half a workforce wants it. Unions are anxious to ensure that workplace ballots will hinge on the percentages of those who vote, rather than of those eligible to vote, as the CBI wants.

Meanwhile Mr Brown came under fire from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and the Liberal Democrats for applying unnecessary downward pressure on public spending, given that tax revenues and economic growth are likely to be higher than predicted.

The IFS and the Lib Dems accused him of hoarding an election "war chest" to win in 2001/2 — not far off the Chancellor's declared strategy of avoiding the errors of past Labour governments which spent first and were later forced to cut back programmes ahead of the following election.

Brown's crock of gold, page 19

Parties in squabble over perks

Ewen MacAskill and Owen Bowcott

A BATTLE between the Conservatives and Labour over extravagant spending descended into farce this week when the Tories challenged the cost of Cherie Blair's new kitchen.

The Conservatives tabled a series of questions about the new designer kitchen at 10 Downing Street, from the value of the hobs to the country of origin. Downing Street replied by releasing figures which, a spokesman said, would show that Labour was no more profligate than the previous government.

The Conservatives, intent on painting the Labour government as sleazy and exorbitant on spending, published figures over the weekend showing the Government had spent more than £13 million in the past eight months on entertainment, taking partners abroad, renovation of flats, and other "extravagances".

Their attack was reinforced by the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, who is normally supportive of Tony Blair but who dubbed the Labour team "Camelot".

"If you really want to re-establish trust in politics, as the Government is saying it wants to do, then a certain frugality, perhaps even meanness, about the amount of taxpayers' money a government spends on itself ought to be appropriate," he said.

Downing Street dismissed the criticism, pointing out that government hospitality, grace-and-favour flats, partners travelling with ministers, and the other alleged extravagances were "not something that was invented post-May 1. They have been part of government for many, many years".

In a counter-attack aimed at showing that the Conservatives had spent just as much in office, a Labour spokesman pointed out how much the Tory government had spent on entertainment in 1994 — almost £15 million.

One Cabinet minister said: "The Tories spent just as much, or more, on parties as we did. Ours just get noticed more because we have more celebrities."

But the Conservative leader, William Hague, was expected to keep up pressure this week by issuing a further compilation of government spending, and several Tory MPs were expected to raise questions about renovations at Downing Street and the rules regarding ministers being accompanied by partners on foreign trips.

Straw acts on migrant 'rip-offs'

Alan Travis

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, last week promised to move against bogus immigration consultants who "ripped off" millions of pounds of legal aid and exploited the plight of their clients.

More than 250 companies or individuals gave the Home Office "cause for concern", said Mr Straw. They include 38 firms of solicitors. Some "consultants" claimed to be Home Office officials, and one even called itself the "Immigration and Nationality Department".

The identities of most of those in the racket are well known to MPs and reputable immigration welfare agencies. Some demand fees of up to £6,000 for advice that is free from government-funded advice agencies such as the Refugee Legal Centre, the Immigration Advice Service, or an applicant's local MP.

With more than 180,000 people now trying to resolve their immigration, citizenship and asylum claims, there has been a sharp growth in advisers active in an area of law that is notoriously complicated.

"Many of the unfounded or abusive claims for immigration or asylum received by the Home Office are the result of misleading advice given by unregulated advisers," said Mr Straw. "For too long they have been able to prey on the vulnerable, causing genuine misery and clogging up the system."

But Mr Straw said that he was powerless to name those involved until legislation was passed to set up an official register of immigration consultants, requiring them to sign up to a tough code of practice. More than 3,000 firms are expected to register.

Mr Straw accused the Law Society of failing to act promptly on Home Office complaints about the activities of certain solicitors. But the society said the names had never been forthcoming.

Mr Straw said he favoured lawyers facing registration in this area.

Claude Moraes, director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said: "We are pleased that the Government has realised that bad immigration and asylum advice is a growth area which causes misery to genuine immigrants and asylum seekers who, in their desperation, end up going to cowboy operators."



The parade ground of the boot camp at Colchester military prison PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Boot camp bites the dust

Alan Travis

BRITAIN'S first military-style "boot camp", designed to deliver a tough regime for teenage young offenders, is to be shut down, the prisons minister, Joyce Quin, has announced.

The "short, sharp, shock" experiment was imported from the United States by the former Home Secretary, Michael Howard, with claims that it would be more effective in stopping teenage tearaways from reoffending.

But official research concludes that it is neither more effective than existing young offender institutions, nor, at a cost of £31,000 a year for every place, value for money.

The camp, opened a year ago, is based at the army's military prison at Colchester, Essex, and is run jointly by the Ministry of Defence and the Prison Service. The year-long pilot scheme has cost more than £1.2 million and was supposed to provide the handpicked 18- to 21-year-olds with a regime of square-bashing and shoe-polishing. It was to be a model for a number of such centres. But it will close at the end of March.

The typical day for the 32 inmates included 2½ hours of physical training and drill. Even basic privileges such as watching a black-and-white television or listening to a radio had to be earned.

The Chief Inspector of Prisons, General Sir David Ramsbotham, criticised the scheme as little more than a sop to the "Bring Back National Service" brigade.

Prison governors welcomed the decision, saying they had urged the Government to close it soon after the election but had been turned down. "Better late than never," said David Roddan, the general secretary of the Prison Governors' Association.

"We are pleased that common sense has now prevailed and this gross waste of resources will come to an end," he said. "US-style boot camps have long been discredited and we think that the military personnel and resources involved should be used for military purposes."

Hague rejects demands for return of 'dirty money'

Ewen MacAskill and Andrew Higgins

THE Tory leader, William Hague, last week refused to hand back £1.5 million donated to the Conservative party by a Hong Kong family with alleged connections to the Golden Triangle drugs trade. He said the money would be returned only if it could be proved to be from an illegal source.

Labour put pressure on Mr Hague to hand back what they called the "dirty money", proposing the money be given to a drugs-related charity.

Labour noted that the Conservatives had taken £440,000 from the fugitive Asil Nadir, the former Polly Peck tycoon, and had not returned that money, even though it was tainted. This contrasted with Labour's own action in returning a £1 million donation from the Formula One chief, Bernie Ecclestone, in the tobacco advertising row.

The Hong Kong-based Oriental Daily News, which is owned by the Ma family, said the family wanted £1 million of the donations back because the Conservatives had failed to deliver on a promise to lift a threat of prosecution for alleged drug trafficking against Ma Sik-chun, who had fled to Taiwan.

Mr Hague, who changed party rules to ban foreign donations after becoming leader last year, said he had been assured that in the past "we have not accepted any money with strings attached".

He said: "We would not accept money from illegal sources. If it had been proved that was not the case, then the money would be returned."

The Oriental Daily last month published a letter sent to the Conservative party in April 1997, addressed to the then Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney, and signed by Ma Ching-kwan, then chairman of the Oriental Press Group. He said the family wanted a refund of £1 million, saying that Tories had reneged on "certain commitments". The family, which donated a further £500,000 in separate contributions, has lobbied for years for an arrangement under which Mr Ma's father could return to Hong Kong and stay out of jail.

But the Hong Kong legal department told the family's lawyers in November 1996 there was "no question of an amnesty or immunity".

Trick by woman, 60, brings calls for fertility curbs

Rory Carroll

WOMEN seeking fertility treatment may face tighter controls after a 60-year-old was believed to have tricked doctors into making her Britain's oldest mother.

Prospective mothers may have to supply birth certificates after Elizabeth Buttle allegedly received treatment worth £10,000 by pretending to be 49 and single.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, which licenses fertility clinics, will consider tightening its code of practice if Mrs Buttle is shown to have lied to doctors at the London Gynaecology and Fertility Centre.

The code does not include specific checks on ages of patients, who can undermine checks by forbidding the clinic to contact their doctor.

Susan Bates, clinical director at the Harley Street-based centre, said client confidentiality rules prevented her confirming whether Mrs Buttle was treated there.

She said: "Certainly we will be reviewing the whole process in the clinic, but I think that will be the case for all clinics around the country. At the moment, we don't ask patients for birth certificates and we have no way of corroborating what they tell us. There are very strict rules over patient confidentiality. We cannot contact a patient's doctor about fertility treatment unless the patient gives specific consent."

Born two months ago, Mrs Buttle's son Joseph was hailed as a miracle baby after she claimed he was conceived naturally with her then partner, Peter Rawstron.

Last week she was reported to be hiding from the media pack which descended on the village of Lampeter, Dyfed, in the company of reporters from the News of the World. The newspaper had bought her story for a reported £100,000.

Ann Widdecombe MP, a former Conservative minister, led calls from family pressure groups to tighten rules on the "laxities" in fertilisation treatment. "We have got totally hung up on a woman's right to have a child without regard to age, circumstances or anything else, and without considering the welfare of the child," she said.

But her reaction was condemned as "opportunistic nonsense" by Lord Robert Winston, a gynaecologist who pioneered research in human reproduction.

He said: "This case is unique, and to focus on it like this is totally bizarre. This isolated mistake doesn't make much of a difference. The fact is that it is very difficult to do anything if people lie. A doctor's consulting room isn't a court of law and nor should it be. We have to take things on good faith. To try to make law out of a hard case goes against all general policy."

Mrs Buttle apparently fooled her family and partner, saying her visit to a clinic was for a throat operation. She went on TV to dismiss doubts among villagers in Lampeter.

She said: "I had a perfectly natural birth. I have never taken fertility drugs or hormone replacement therapy. It is just malicious gossip. It was a physical relationship and that was that. We never used precautions because I thought I'd gone through the menopause."

The Office for National Statistics said Mrs Buttle could face prosecution for perjury if she misled Mr Rawstron into signing his name on her son's birth certificate as the natural father.

Mr Rawstron, aged 58, who runs an agricultural fodder business, has returned to his wife of 30 years, apparently after falling out with Mrs Buttle over her deal with the News of the World.

Calls for new law on sex discrimination

Clare Dyer

MINISTERS are studying proposals from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) for a radical overhaul of sex discrimination law, with stronger powers to force employers to eliminate sex bias.

The commission wants existing legislation replaced with a "super law": a single Act of Parliament guaranteeing equal treatment for men and women.

Labour pledged in a strategy paper before the general election last year to "simplify and update" legislation with a Sex Equality Bill.

If enacted in the form the EOC wants, it would be the first British statute to ban sexual harassment expressly. Lawyers have "invented" the law of sexual harassment through tribunal cases by successfully arguing that it is a form of discrimination.

Gays would also be protected from discrimination for the first time.

The proposals would cover public and private employers and all public appointments, paid or unpaid. Public bodies and private employers would have a duty to work towards eliminating sex discrimination, including workforce monitoring by gender and review of pay structures to ensure equal pay for men and women.

The EOC would have new powers to police the legislation, modelled on the powers of the Fair Employment Commission in Northern Ireland, which was set up to promote equality of opportunity for Protestants and Catholics. The commission would be able to take enforcement proceedings before industrial tribunals, which could fine recalcitrant employers.

The EOC has discussed the proposals with the junior minister for education and employment, Alan Howarth, and was expected to present them this week to the first meeting of the all-party parliamentary group on sex equality. Final recommendations, to be drawn up after a three-month consultation period, will be submitted to the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett.

The EOC believes shortcomings in the law have frustrated attempts to close the pay gap between men and women — still around 20 per cent after more than two decades of anti-discrimination legislation. Of more than 8,000 claims brought since the Equal Pay Act was introduced, less than 10 per cent have succeeded.



Presidential affairs put in proportion

HERE WE go again, with another tale of bedroom Bill and that loose presidential zipper. This time, even as the Whitewater affair swirled around him and as Paula Jones was bringing her own separate charges of sexual harassment, he is alleged to have dallied regularly in his private study off the Oval Office with a young intern, Monica Lewinsky. The issue is whether Ms Lewinsky was offered jobs to keep quiet, and whether this amounts to obstruction of justice and conspiracy to commit perjury, sufficient to imperil the presidency.

Before rushing to the yellowed files from 1974 about Richard Nixon and talk of impeachment, it is important to bear some politics in mind. After all, the Congressmen and Senators will, and any impeachment process must be decided by the House of Representatives, who then bring the case before the Senate, where a two-thirds majority is required. In 1973-74 Nixon was an unpopular president, with an even more unpopular vice-president, Spiro Agnew, himself forced from office after pleading "no contest" to charges of taking bribes. The unpopular Vietnam war was still staggering on to its humiliating end, and the United States economy was reeling under the Opec oil price rise and the start of hyper-inflation. Today, the US is enjoying its most sustained period of peace and prosperity since the twenties. The president is popular, even though most voters suspect that his sexual morality is as loose as polls suggest their own to be. And the Republican majority in the Congress must decide whether it is worth impeaching Clinton if that simply risks losing the next election by entrenching Vice-President Al Gore as a White House incumbent.

Then there is the legal question. If special prosecutor Kenneth Starr did indeed send another White House aide, Linda Tripp, to wear a secret microphone while quizzing Ms Lewinsky, that raises the problem of entrapment. Ms Tripp had been appointed by the previous Republican administration, for whom Mr Starr had served as solicitor-general, which adds a dash of partisan politics to this stew. Ms Lewinsky was recommended to her new job in New York by Vernon Jordan, one of the most expensive lawyers in Washington. Mr Jordan is a presidential crony, but he is not a federal employee. Even if the allegations are true, he may embody a firebreak that could protect his president from direct legal responsibility.

Finally, there is the matter of proportion. US voters have twice elected Clinton to the White House, knowing him to be no choirboy. Marital fidelity is not part of the constitution's job description. And while naturally lapping up the scandal, US voters show signs of becoming less puritan and more — shall we say — European in distinguishing between private and public life. Above all, impeachment is a deadly serious matter, best reserved for deadly serious offences. Nixon was caught with tape-recorded evidence proving him to be covering up a political crime, trying to squash with bribes evidence tying White House employees to the squalid attempt to bug Democratic offices in election year. That *droit de seigneur* White House tradition of serial infidelity, as established by John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, may be as gross as it is foolish. But it is not yet the stuff of impeachment.

Scourge of racism in Germany

IN THE dying days of the German Democratic Republic, the vast demonstrations that swept away the communist leadership seemed an unalloyed good. Yet even then there were voices warning that alongside the liberals, the socialists, and the Christians on the streets were those moved by a nationalism that inclined to racism, which had not wholly repudiated Nazism, and which regretted the defeat of 1945. It was hardly surprising that such traditions should survive in a Russian-dominated half-state. The GDR had no experience to compare with an economically successful Federal Republic's full integration as a valued partner into the Western system, and little exposure to the pluralist and multiracial ideas that shaped non-communist countries.

Neo-Nazism had already been for years a form of youth protest and provocation that the communist authorities had tried in vain to suppress. What is sobering is that more than six years after unification it still is. The reports on the situation offer us a dismal picture of a significant number of small town and inner city youth given over to hatred of foreigners, attracted to neo-Nazi ideas of and dedicated, at least in theory, to the notion of establishing "foreigner-free" liberated zones. In this, they have the tacit support of some of their elders, something of which we have been aware since the crowds in Rostock placidly watched foreigners being attacked in 1992.

East Germans are disillusioned, and have reason to be. Helmut Kohl's government did not do enough to keep East German firms in being, while West German industry, which should have moved in to replace the inefficient factories and offices that were closed or reduced in size after unification, did not do so on a big enough scale. East Germans were drawn into a society where economic power and material plenty were of even more central importance than they are in other Western societies, and then found themselves with relatively little of either. In the inevitable reaction, the ideas of European unity, ecological purity, and racial amity that counterpoint the economic emphasis in western Germany have had limited influence in the east.

Western Germany is not exempt from these developments. An unpleasant chemistry between the far right in the two halves of Germany has seen racist gangs travelling east to stir up trouble, and the rightist German groups taking heart at the thought of eastern reinforcements. The defence minister, Volker Ruhe, has had to accept a parliamentary inquiry into neo-Nazi incidents in the army. Worse than neo-Nazism and the dribble of neo-Nazi incidents in the west is the fact that West Germans who would not consciously embrace racist or far right ideas seem ready to work themselves up into an hysterical state over immigrants and foreigners, as the recent uproar over Kurds shows. What is happening in both halves of Germany in an election year is that the mainstream political agenda is being affected by racist and extremist ideas. A government that sees itself as a leader in Europe surely has a duty to curb the growth of racist attitudes, whether in the crude protest form they take in the east or the more subtle variants seen in the west.

Miners deserve full compensation

THE NEWSREEL image of cheerful British miners with smudged faces doing their bit for the post-war effort had a really dark side to it. Not only was coal-mining one of the most dangerous industries for accidents, but the coal dust contained a longer-term risk. Last week Mr Justice Turner finally recognised that when coal miners have worked for years at the pit face and then contract emphysema or chronic bronchitis, the two events are probably related. He also concluded that British Coal failed to take sufficient measures to minimise the dust risk by the use of known technology for more than 20 years. The Government to its credit has said it will deal promptly with all valid claims. But after years of official foot-dragging influenced by political hostility to the miners and their industry from successive Tory administrations, the decision comes very late — and for many, tragically too late.

In 1974 a compensation scheme was first announced for pneumoconiosis, the lung disease caused by larger particles of dust. Since then there has been dogged resistance to the corollary that finer dust fractions can also cause serious damage. The link was finally accepted in 1993 in a move to neutralise opposition to a new round of pit closures. But less than one in nine applicants was successful. The disability criteria were extremely high and payment was not backdated. When former miners in desperation began to resort to the courts, British Coal had the nerve to blame them for taking advantage of government "compassion".

Last week's decision opens the door to a series of awards that may eventually exceed the sum raised by the privatisation of British Coal. The state will be liable because Tory legislation removed the burden of compensation from the private companies that acquired the assets. Britain can and should afford it. The ex-miners come from areas already devastated by harsh closures, which turned well-knit communities into zones of despair. Politicians dawdled while natural causes reduced the claimants' numbers. Now that the test case has been won, a Labour government should wait no longer to deliver an honourable settlement for all.

Iran caught up in an endless battle of wills

Martin Woollacott

THE extraordinary events that led to the Iranian revolution began 20 years ago with an article in the semi-official Tehran newspaper Ettel'at attacking Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as, among other things, a creature of the British. Seldom in history can a piece of black propaganda have gone so badly wrong. When students in the religious city of Qom gathered in protest, the security forces killed 70 of them. So was established the rapid cycle of blood, mourning, and revenge that brought the Shah down in one bewildering year.

At the time, the Iranian upheaval was compared to the French and Russian revolutions. Two decades later it looks more like a convulsion in Iran's own eccentric and special history than a political model for others. But the international implications of that convulsion were nevertheless huge. The fact that a Shia revolution gave a push to the development of Sunni fundamentalism is probably less important than the way in which it re-arranged the international politics of the Middle East. Two Gulf wars came out of it, for Saddam Hussein would almost certainly not have attacked Iran had Tehran and Washington not been so much at odds, and he might not have prevailed in the conflict if he had not had American help. And, if he had not prevailed, the second Gulf war would not have happened.

Relations within the Iraq-Iran-United States triangle may well have been more important in determining events in the Middle East than those within the Israel-PLO-US triangle. The most recent consequence has been the US's effort to "contain" both Iraq and Iran while attempting to persuade Israel into a peace with the Palestinians. This is a policy so ambitious and complicated that it is not surprising that even a superpower has faltered in putting it into practice.

The most striking thing about Iran after 20 years is how little the issues have changed. At home, Iran still falls short of any synthesis between its religious and its liberal traditions, while managing to maintain, it must be said, a system that has a genuine democratic dimension. Abroad, it has yet to find any middle way in its relations with the US and Europe, or even with most of its neighbours, while the problem with Iraq cannot be solved until Saddam has gone.

Iran's politics, in which clerics and a few religious laymen have to try to meet the needs of a population that wants a whole range of "modern" things, from more stable prices to better TV, and from freedom to travel abroad to greater opportunities for women, exhibits the same contradictions. The Iranian constitutional gridlock, which can set a popularly elected president against a religious leader appointed for life, or against an undisciplined parliament, is also unchanged, as is the existence of a range of centres of power outside the government. You could not have designed a constitution or political system better if your aim had been to ensure that nothing was ever resolved, or that reform and reaction would dance an endless dance into the far future.

Thus the constantly recurring theme of the popular, or relatively popular, elected leader stymied in his purposes. Around the new Iranian president, Mohammad Khatami, swept into office last May on a wave of support from Iranians, in particular from youth, women, and the minorities, gather the same vague hopes and expectations that once centred on Abolhasan Bani Sadr and Mehdi Bazargan, moderate leaders of the early years of the revolution, and on Rafsanjani, the last president before Khatami. There are even some similarities between those hopes and those that focused on the Shah's one or two independent-minded prime ministers over the years. Perhaps Khatami can succeed where they failed. If so he will disprove the thesis that, if there is one consistent principle of Iranian politics, it is that the centre does not hold.

The hopes and fears of the year of revolution are brought to life again in a new book* by Desmond Harney, a former British diplomat who was an unusually well-informed banker and businessman living in Tehran. Written at the time, his journal of the 12 months that began with the Ettel'at article and ended with cars honking their way through the capital to the chant of *"Shah raft!"* ("The Shah has left") is very evocative of those jagged times.

HIS book serves as a reminder of how much the Iranian revolution was a jolting series of surprises, and how to the end most observers fought against the likely outcome. In an afterword, Harney reflects that when he put down his thoughts on the vulnerability of the Shah and the determined nature of Khomeini and the religious class, he was right, and "When I allowed myself to hope that the good men of the centre would somehow get their act together, or that the half-way house of [Shahpour] Bakhtiar might succeed . . . I was wrong".

It is curious, to say the least, that something similar could be said about Iranian politics after the revolution as well as before. The centre has, so far, never managed to prevail. Now a struggle is under way between Khatami and the religious leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, which is most visible in foreign affairs.

Occasionally, Tehran takes on again the revolutionary aspect of 20 years ago, as last November when great crowds captured the centre of the capital to celebrate the Iranian soccer team's qualification for the World Cup. The police gave up as the streets rang with illicit music and as men and women, some even without their head scarves, mingled freely. There are two kinds of politics going on within Iran, one reflecting the concerns of most ordinary and particularly of most middle-class people, and the other, the sometimes arcane and sometimes very material interests of different factions within the religio-political establishment. They are very imperfectly connected. The disconnection is not as grave as it was under the monarchy. Iran is not threatened by another revolution. Yet its rulers might with profit study again the tale of the last year of the Shah.

*The Priest and the King by Desmond Harney, published by IB Tauris

The Washington Post

With Clinton, His Past Is Ever Present

David Maraniss

THE NEWS reached Ron Addington at home in Arkansas one morning last week as he was preparing to drive over to Henderson State University to teach a class in public relations: His old friend Bill Clinton seemed to be in trouble again and the issue was sex. When Addington arrived at the campus in Arkadelphia, sex and the president was the only topic anyone wanted to talk about. His thoughts inevitably drifted back to 1974, and he was haunted by the understanding that with Clinton — as always — past is prologue.

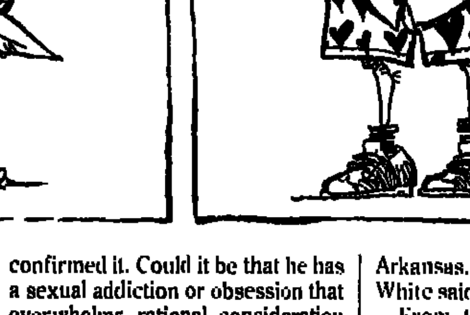
Addington was there at the start, among the first people to join Clinton's staff when the young law professor began his political career in 1974 by running for Congress in northwest Arkansas. Rumors and concerns about Clinton's sex life troubled that first campaign from the beginning. His staff was forced to deal with problems imagined (conservative preachers denouncing Clinton as a homosexual) and real (the delicate situation of their candidate's multiple girlfriends). From this early episode came a series of discomforting questions, and in a sense those questions have never gone away, even as the consequences have magnified immeasurably. They shadowed Clinton to the governor's office in Little Rock and on to Washington, and they returned last week, with more intensity than ever, when his presidency was rocked by allegations that he had an affair with a White House intern and had asked the young woman to lie about it.

The questions are now being asked in countless ways, but they all come down to this: Why?

If Clinton did what he is alleged to have done, why would he do it? If he did it, why would he jeopardize his presidency, a lifelong dream? If he did it, why would he, an inherently cautious politician with an obvious need for public affirmation, follow such a risky and careless private path?

Although history is never totally predictive, and human nature even less so, in Clinton's case the patterns seem eerily familiar, as Ron Addington rediscovered the other day. There are repetitive cycles in Clinton's life and recurring traits in his character that go a long way toward anticipating what he will do and, afterward, explaining why he did it.

The repetitive patterns of Clinton's personality become apparent starting with his childhood in a troubled family in small-town Arkansas. The traits that first surfaced then include his tendency to block things out, to compartmentalize different aspects of his life, to deny reality at times, to keep going no matter what obstacles face him, and to feel a constant hunger for affirmation. Other traits are more familiar to historians and psychiatrists as the generic characteristics of many powerful and ambitious men. These include an enormous appetite for life, a powerful sex drive, the ready availability of sexual partners attracted to power, a lack of normal standards of self-control, an addiction to the privileges of public office and a reliance on aides to shield him from public scrutiny of private behavior.



These characteristics serve contradictory purposes, historians and psychiatrists say, at once fueling Clinton's extraordinary rise to power at the same time that they have threatened it. In his cycle of loss and recovery, the traits that account for his success are inseparable from the ones that provoke failure — the drives and impulses seem one and the same. And because this constant cycle of last-minute recovery from seemingly inevitable disaster has so far ended successfully, with the realization of his lifelong dream not just to be president but a two-term president, Clinton has further developed another trait common among powerful and successful men — the self-delusion of invincibility.

It was that characteristic, perhaps above all others, according to Washington psychiatrist E. James Lieberman, that might have overtaken Clinton if the allegations are true that he had a sexual relationship with the White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. "It reminds me of the Titanic," Lieberman said. "Lots of power. Big. Sexy. Thinks he's invulnerable, like the builders of the ship. And here is this 21-year-old iceberg."

That is not to say that the allegations about Clinton's sexual behavior will sink him — they never have. Before this latest episode, public opinion polls showed that voters cared far less about his private life than his performance in office, which they considered effective enough to elect him to a second term.

Clinton's political career has been prematurely buried before, most notably six years ago when his nascent presidential campaign was besieged with reports that he had dodged the draft and slept with Gennifer Flowers. And there is one other repetitive pattern in his career that might redound to his benefit: In times of trouble, he has been aided unwittingly by his adversaries, who have come across as less sympathetic characters than Clinton, obsessed only with getting him.

It is undeniable that Clinton has had an active extramarital sex life since he married his wife in 1975 — Clinton himself has admitted as much, and friends have privately confirmed it. Could it be that he has a sexual addiction or obsession that overwhelms rational consideration of the public consequences of his private actions?

During at least one period of his life, there is some evidence that Clinton actively examined his own behavior. He was the governor of Arkansas then, in the mid-1980s, and his brother, Roger, had been convicted and imprisoned on drug charges and was being treated for cocaine addiction. As part of his brother's therapy, Clinton took part in counseling with Roger and their mother, and occasionally went to a therapist alone. After those sessions, he discussed the subject of addiction with several friends.

"I think we're all addicted to something," he said once. "Some people are addicted to drugs. Some to power. Some to food. Some to sex. We're all addicted to something."

CLINTON'S family has a history of addiction: His stepfather was addicted to alcohol, his brother was addicted to cocaine, and his grandmother, Edith Cassidy, in the final years of her life, was addicted to morphine.

Whether sex can be an addiction or not, there is ample evidence of powerful men whose political ambitions seemed matched only by their sexual appetites. One need look no further than Kennedy and Johnson to find examples among Clinton's predecessors in the White House.

For political leaders with strong sexual appetites, the availability of willing partners always seems to be there, by accident or design. From the moment Clinton became governor in 1979, he was constantly surrounded by eager women. Rudy Moore, his first chief of staff, said the governor's office was visited regularly by an array of provocative women, "hangers-on who could get you in trouble."

Randy White, Clinton's travel aide at the time, said the governor enjoyed nothing more than to go out on the road, where he could frequent clubs late at night, his table encircled by pretty women drawn to the powerful young leader of Arkansas. "He loved the road," White said.

From those early days to now, Clinton's aides and advisers, including his wife, have found themselves working at what might seem to be contradictory purposes. Within his private orbit, they have worked strenuously to shield him from his own most reckless instincts, removing sexual temptations whenever possible.

The effort to protect Clinton from Clinton has continued in his White House years. White House sources say that the reason Lewinsky was transferred out of the White House and over to the Pentagon was that Evelyn Lieberman, a Clinton aide who served the first lady's interests on the staff, became concerned about the young woman's flirtatious nature and the president's noticeable reaction to her.

Whenever sexual allegations about Clinton reached a crisis point during his days as governor, Hillary Clinton and his longtime aide in Arkansas, Betsy Wright, served as his chief defenders, dismissing the stories, attacking the accusers, drafting responses, rallying the troops to his cause. Wright spent all of 1992 as a one-woman damage control operation, ferreting out potential problems on the Clinton sex front, looking for what she called, with typical sarcasm, "bimbo eruptions."

There have been many times during their 23 years as a married couple that Hillary Clinton has expressed intense private anger with her husband's behavior, according to friends. But her commitment to his politics, to their shared love of policy, always proved stronger than any urge to turn away from him. When the latest allegations broke last week, there was immediate speculation that this time she would have to leave. The repetitive patterns of their life together suggested otherwise, that she would do what she began doing last week — calling all their friends with one more rallying cry.

David Maraniss is the author of First in His Class: The Biography of Bill Clinton

Kaczynski Admits He Is Unabomber

William Booth
in Sacramento, California

THEODORE J. KACZYNSKI, the schizophrenic hermit filled with rage against technological society, confessed as part of a plea bargain last week that he was the terrorist Unabomber who killed three and maimed dozens more in a deranged campaign against scientists, computers and jet airplanes.

Under terms of the agreement, he was spared the death penalty but will serve life in prison without possibility of release.

"The Unabomber's career is over," said lead federal prosecutor, Robert Cleary, in a statement outside the courthouse moments after the guilty pleas were entered.

In the last-minute deal, struck on the day that opening arguments in his long-delayed trial were due to begin, Kaczynski pleaded guilty to 13 counts of transporting explosive devices with the intent to kill or maim. Kaczynski also pleaded guilty to all federal charges against him — those here and those in another case not yet presented in New Jersey — comprising five bombings during his decades-long crusade against modern technology.

At the same time, Kaczynski admitted in court that he placed or mailed another 11 bombs, for which he was not charged.

Kaczynski's admission of guilt in the series of bombings closed one of the longest-running, most expensive and most bizarre investigations in FBI history — which ended only when Kaczynski's brother alerted authorities soon after recognizing the fevered anti-technology themes in a 35,000-word manifesto published in September 1995 by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Cleary said the government — which turned down earlier attempts by the defense to reach a plea bargain — agreed to accept life imprisonment rather than execution because last week marked the first time that Kaczynski agreed to plead guilty without any other conditions except being granted a reprieve from death.

The prosecutor also called Kaczynski's younger brother David, who first alerted authorities that his older sibling might be the Unabomber, "a true American hero."

David Kaczynski previously decried the government's insistence on pursuing a death sentence for his brother. Kaczynski will now undergo a pre-sentence investigation and then will return to court here in May to be formally sentenced to life in prison.

The judge also warned the Unabomber that he would be forced to pay restitution if he ever received any funds for his writings, mementos or interviews.



Pinochet Faces Court Investigation

Anthony Faiola in Buenos Aires

GENERAL Augusto Pinochet, who ruled Chile for 17 years as leader of a feared dictatorship and remains head of its army, faces an unprecedented investigation into alleged violent crimes and illegal seizure of property during his brutal reign.

With Pinochet's scheduled retirement as military chief only weeks away, a Chilean judge, Juan Guzman, told reporters last week that he will conduct an official investigation of a complaint filed by Chile's Communist Party that names Pinochet as personally responsible for disappearances, torture and murder of thousands during his iron-fisted rule from 1973 to 1990.

Although Pinochet, 82, is protected by immunity and amnesty laws that he established during his tenure, the decision to launch an investigation despite those protective measures was hailed as a major symbolic victory by those who saw their loved ones die under his right-wing dictatorship.

"It is time this man paid for his crimes, and this is the first time in our history there has been any official attempt to do it," said Jorge Insunza, a council member of the Communist Party, whose president, Gladys Marin, was jailed briefly last year for insulting Pinochet. Marin's husband "disappeared" under the Pinochet regime.

Yet the victory may ultimately prove hollow. Pinochet still wields significant political power, and the protection afforded him as army chief may allow him to evade trial and even spare him the embarrassment of testifying in person before the judge, who, under Chilean law, also acts as investigator. Instead, Pinochet may simply be requested to submit a written rebuttal, sources close to the case said.

"He has a kind of political immunity that will be difficult to get around," said Fabiola Letelier, sister of Orlando Letelier, the Chilean ambassador to the United States who was assassinated in Washington in 1976 by Pinochet's secret police. She now heads a human rights group in Chile.

"While I think this is an important decision, I am very doubtful that we will obtain a criminal judgment against Pinochet in Chile," she said.

The planned investigation of Pinochet comes at a time when Chileans are debating as never before his constitutional right to become a senator for life — a role he assured himself before handing power to an elected president, Patricio Aylwin, in 1990.

Indeed, in an uncommon show of passion among the normally subdued Chileans, politicians threw objects at one another during a recent legislative debate on his amnesty and his right to a seat in the Senate.

Pinochet himself has grown cautious enough to postpone his retirement as head of the army, a position that makes him theoretically immune from prosecution. He had planned to step down on January 26 but has delayed the move until March 10 — a day before he is to be sworn in as senator for life, and therefore accorded another form of immunity from political prosecution.

However, more than 18 groups are attempting to marshal enough support among politicians to stop Pinochet's accession to the Senate. Chile's constitution grants a lifetime senatorial seat to presidents who serve more than six years, but because Pinochet was never elected, his opponents say he is not entitled to that benefit.

It's Time to Turn the Page On Relations With Cuba

COMMENT
Richard Estrada

ASSESSING U.S.-Cuban relations is never easy. Cuba is a veritable graveyard of diplomatic, academic and journalistic reputations. But the difficulty of the task surely increases when the vicar of Christ decides to enter the scene.

What can be confidently said about the five-day visit to Cuba by 77-year-old Pope John Paul II is this: It is a visit in honor of the Cuban people, not Fidel Castro. The 71-year-old Castro may benefit from the visit, but time itself will soon render him history.

For those wanting a thaw in U.S.-Cuban relations, the greatest danger lies in a cynical dismissal of the pope's message of reconciliation between "Cubans and other Cubans." That may be the most important part of his political message. It should be the basis of any rapprochement between the United States and Cuba. Yes, the situation in Cuba differs from the situation in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe in the 1980s, when John Paul's message helped hasten an end to communism.

But the dynamics of the Cuba question may be changing. John Paul II would never allude to it, but the recent death of Fidel Castro's bitter enemy, Jorge Mas Canosa, the founder and leader of the Cuban American National Foundation in Miami, has opened up new possibilities of reconciliation between Cubans and Cuban Americans.

Mas Canosa's unquestioned ability to influence U.S. foreign policy with campaign contributions, hardball lobbying and public relations savvy rendered him the most influential Cuban American in American politics. The Helms-Burton law, which seeks to punish the foreign-owned subsidiaries of U.S. companies doing business in Cuba, exists largely because of Mas Canosa's intense desire to further isolate Cuba.

Here's another reason to think change may be at hand. The pope's visit has caused a thousand or more Cuban Americans to return to the land of their birth for the first time since they fled. And it is not widely known that 15,000 Cuban Americans visited Cuba in December alone, according to Cuban officials in Washington. Being able to see and remember faces instead of considering only Castro could modify the attitudes of some Cuban Americans. Those who recently returned to Cuba crossed not only a border, but a frontier of the mind, as some begin to reconsider enmity born long ago.

To be sure, even Cuban functionaries, such as Ricardo Alarcon, president of the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power, say no one should expect a "miracle" from the pope's visit.

Official Washington fancies that its policy toward Cuba is driven by Realpolitik, and it once was. But even though the Cold War is over, Washington for political reasons has in the recent past winked at hard-line Cuban American activities that occasionally have strayed beyond the law. The longer the policy of antagonism between the United States and Cuba is allowed to continue, the greater the prospects of a violent overthrow of Castro. But that itself is fraught with danger for U.S. interests.

Such a climax could devolve into a bloody civil war on the island. That would delay the development of a prosperous, stable and democratic Cuba that would serve U.S. national interests. American strategists also know that the possibility of a huge exodus from a Cuba in turmoil looms large. It could easily surpass the number of Cubans who fled to South Florida in 1980 — about 125,000 in a four-month period — when Castro allowed those he saw as malcontents to leave the island.

The current U.S. policy towards Cuba of near-complete isolation is anachronistic. Instead of furthering U.S. interests in a principled fashion, the policy is being driven largely by special interest pleading by Cuban American conservatives based in Miami. Are Castro's strongest foes in the United States truly interested in a peaceful transition to democracy on the island, or is their principal goal one of revenge?

Whatever the answer may be, Castro should not be rewarded by the unilateral lifting of the U.S. trade and travel embargo. That may do more harm than good, especially considering the sacrifices of those Cubans who stayed to challenge oppression. Again, let's focus on the Cuban people themselves.

A quid-pro-quo, sector-by-sector relaxation of the embargo in return for improvements in human rights, economic freedom and multiparty democratic elections remains the best option. As for the Helms-Burton law, it was always the equivalent of moving the goal posts. A special prayer for its repeal is in order.



Clinton and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in the White House last week PHOTO: JOYCE NALTCHAYAN

Arafat Gives Warning on Peace

Barton Gellman

PALESTINIAN leader Yasser Arafat departed Washington last week amid indications of pessimism that the intensive round of White House talks would lead to agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority any time soon.

Arafat told a group of foreign policy specialists that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had met with President Clinton earlier in the week, had failed to bring a new offer to advance the talks. "Netanyahu came empty-handed," Arafat said.

"I have been warning of the consequences of the collapse of the peace process but my warnings are interpreted by Mr. Netanyahu as threats," he said, looking tired and irritable. "Once again I am warning you . . . If Netanyahu continues with his policies it's inevitable, it's like a powder keg. There will be explosions in the area."

After more than a week of controversy over an invitation to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum — it was extended, retracted and extended again — the Palestinian leader said he could not find time for a tour and promised to take up the offer on his next trip. Some of his Arab advisers expressed skepticism that a visit to the museum would occur, given what they said were the troublesome domestic politics of the invitation, especially after the earlier rebuff.

Previous American hopes to set up an early three-way meeting, in which Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright would attempt to close a deal with the two Middle East leaders, appeared to be fading. Palestinian officials said they expected instead that U.S. special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross would travel to the region first.

According to Nabil Shaath, who serves as planning minister under Arafat, Clinton relayed an offer from Netanyahu for an Israeli withdrawal of 9 percent of the West Bank, on condition that the Palestinians forgo a subsequent withdrawal to which Israel had committed in writing.

Arafat, whose formal position is that the next two stages of withdrawal must amount to 60 percent of the West Bank, is unwilling to discuss a lower figure until he receives assurances that Netanyahu will undertake all the required "further redeployments" under existing agreements.

Equally yawning gaps divide the two sides on the American request for a "time out" from Israel on settlement activity in the West Bank. Arafat is still demanding a complete halt to land expropriation, new road building and construction of housing beyond 50 meters from existing structures. Netanyahu is still speaking broadly of "natural growth" and has made no specific undertaking to limit such activity.

Arafat also has declined to agree to several security-related steps requested by the United States on Israel's behalf, including the dismissal of Brig. Gen. Ghazi Jabali, chief of a Palestinian police force in the Gaza Strip. Israel maintains it has evidence that Jabali directed armed attacks on Israelis, though it has not released any such evidence. Palestinians maintain that Israel has not provided sufficient proof to warrant action.

The American approach at this point is to hope that each leader will reflect further, and shift positions after arriving home. Albright said both leaders "need to assess what they've heard" from Clinton. "The president laid out a reasonable way to try to bridge the gaps," she said.

From the Palestinian point of view the best things about Arafat's visit were the parity of treatment they believe Clinton accorded the two leaders and a new phrase used by Clinton to describe the American view of the goals of the ongoing talks. The idea, Clinton said, was that Israel can live in security "and the Palestinians can realize their aspirations to live as a free people."

Arafat described this is as an important declaration by Clinton, while Albright echoed the president's statement and said Palestinian aspirations merited respect.

Girls Forced Into A Bond of Tyranny

Stephen Buckley in Korhogo, Ivory Coast, reports on the plight of children made brides against their will

THE GRIOTS are wailing. They howl into a squealing microphone as fellow storytellers, in a storm of sunflower golds and indigos and teals and cornflower blues, dip, leap, shake, stomp, twirl and shudder in fierce, ecstatic dancing.

It is just after noon, and inside, in a steamy square room no larger than a prison cell, Aisha Camara is covered in a pink-and-white striped blanket. She briefly lifts a veil that hides her angular features. The griots and her neighbors are celebrating her wedding day, but she is not smiling.

She is 14 years old, and in this town in northern Ivory Coast, and throughout sub-Saharan Africa, such ceremonies are common. It does not matter that in numerous countries on this continent, such early marriages have been illegal for years.

Aisha's family will not publicly discuss this tradition, but people in her community eagerly defend it. People such as Boubacar Maiga, a neighbor, say forcing girls to marry at such ages protects them from immorality, strengthens clan relationships and honors Islam.

"If a girl doesn't marry at an early age, she'll sleep with many men. Nobody would want to marry her later," said Maiga, 55. Such marriages, he said, keep girls from "adventures". He married his first wife when she was 11. He forced his oldest daughter to marry last year when she was 12. His next daughter, age 7, is scheduled to wed this year.

Constance Yai, a prominent women's rights activist in this West African country, sees only tyranny in the tradition. Her battle to eradicate childhood marriage is, for her, a struggle between an oppressive Africa tied blindly to traditions, and one urgently seeking to embrace the modern world. "Pedophilia is a phrase that's only recently become popular in the developed world," she said in her office in Abidjan, Ivory Coast's capital. "But in Africa, it's been around a long time."

The practice of forcing girls into marriage took hold decades ago throughout sub-Saharan Africa and is especially widespread in countries there with large Muslim populations. The marriages typically occur within clans, the girl compelled to wed a distant relative — often two or three times her age — who sometimes has chosen her long before puberty.

Experts on Islamic law say the Koran teaches that a girl can be married as soon as she can conceive, but they say the religion does not condone forcing girls into wedlock.

Sociologists and teachers of Islamic law say that West African Muslims have accepted the tradition because it ostensibly promotes social stability, cementing ties between clans and preventing promiscuity.

Activists and medical professionals say pre-adolescent marriage is partly responsible for Africa's maternal mortality rates, among the highest in the world. Yai says it is not unusual for both mother and child to die during birth.

"Often the girls are pulled from school and forced to drop their education and become a wife overnight. These young women cannot turn to anyone to say no or to seek help," Yai said. The real reason the practice has prevailed is that families often receive hundreds, even thousands of dollars as dowry, she said.

But the practice has come under increasing assault since 1996, when Fanta Keita, then 12, killed her 30-year-old husband. Fanta has a heart-shaped face, a simple, sweet smile, bright, almond-shaped eyes and a tiny voice. You cannot imagine her slitting someone's throat. But that is what she did. She killed her husband of three weeks, was arrested the next day and, largely because of Yai's Ivorian Association for the Defense of Women, almost immediately became a cause.

Fanta's parents had forced her to marry a distant cousin she had never heard of. Fanta and her husband lived together in Abidjan. Every night, she said, he raped and beat her. Finally, on one night, she slipped into the kitchen and — she put her head on the table, covering up with her arms as she said this — "I took the knife and I cut him."

The police held her in the Abidjan prison for nearly a year before women's rights groups prevailed on President Henri Konan Bedie to free her, at least until her trial. Fanta's case has galvanized women's rights activists to press the government to publicize a 30-year-old law that outlaws early and forced marriage.

"We have to let these young girls know they have the right to refuse this type of practice," said Yai. Recently another campaign was staged to let police know that "when a young girl comes to the police, they must help her instead of saying, 'That's a family problem.'"

Maiga had not heard of Fanta Keita until recently. He does not hold much sympathy for her. "In Islam, when the girl is married, her husband is just under God," he said. "You should obey him, no matter what." Maiga defends early marriage without shame or self-consciousness. In an ideal world, a woman would not be married until 18, he says, but we do not live in an ideal world.

It is a world in which girls chase boys, have sex, produce babies, shame families, he said. "Your neighbors won't respect you," he said. "They will say I failed to fulfill my duties as a father."

He said Azara, his daughter who married last year at age 12, frequently would leave the house and return hours later, and he would not know where she had been. Once he tied her up, burned her back with a piece of iron, then locked her in a room for three days without food. He laughed as he told this story; so did the men nearby.

He never sent Azara to school because if girls went to "modern" school, they might meet people who would drive them from their traditions. Educated girls "argue with their parents. They start asking questions. They want to have a say in everything in their life", he said. And educated girls do not want to marry until they are "19 or 20".

As soon as he married off Azara, "I got peace of mind," Maiga said. "She was no longer my problem." She became Ibrahim Haidara's "problem". Haidara, 41, has known Maiga for years, and he first saw Azara at Maiga's house. He says he picked her to be his bride when she was 6 years old.

HAIDARA, a fisherman and farmer, is an educated man who speaks fluent French and gives instruction in the Koran. Asked about the case of Fanta Keita, he said her husband "deserved what he got". Yet he defended the tradition that Fanta struck out against. He said marrying a 12-year-old is fine because "it's the parents" — both the man's and the girl's — who make the decision.

Back in Maiga's neighborhood, the dancing and singing have stopped. About 50 men sit in the Camara family compound shortly after 4pm, ready to seal the marriage officially. There will be no exchange of vows; the husband, 36, is not even there. He is waiting for Aisha at his house a half-mile away.

The husband's family has brought dresses, fabric, shoes and other things, wrapped in royal blue cloth. His family offers a symbolic bride price (less than $100). Then, the ceremony over, the families exchange cola nuts and candies.

Dozens of women march into and out of the house, as Aisha remains wrapped in her pink-and-white blanket and veil. Teenage friends and young women sit on the floor around her in the tiny dim room.

Darkness envelops the sky, and hundreds of women are crushed into the Camaras' courtyard. An elderly woman escorts Aisha out of the room, down stairs and outside. A blue-and-white covering and the veil hide the girl's face.

Aisha, barefoot, sits on a stool, and the older woman dips a cloth into a gourd and wipes Aisha's face. Then the woman meticulously scrubs the girl's arms and legs.

Women sing and chant and clap. The crowd closes in until the circle around Aisha is suffocatingly tight. Heat rises off skin.

A few minutes later, the older woman lifts Aisha off the stool, and a knot of a half-dozen women shuffle the girl back into the house. The wedding is over.

Thirty minutes later, as guests begin to leave, everyone is told that Aisha is still inside when she is actually sitting down in front of the Camaras' home, head stooped and still covered, waiting to be taken to her husband's house. She is there 10, 15 minutes. No one seems to notice. Then a white Peugeot arrives, scoops her up and drives her into the darkness.

Griots sing and dance at the wedding of 14-year-old Aisha Camara PHOTOGRAPH CAROL GUZY

Hong Kong's Tourism Goes Into Tailspin

Keith B. Richburg in Hong Kong

YOU COULD call 80-year-old Chan Mok an unfortunate casualty of free market forces. For 20 years, Chan has stood outside the Star Ferry terminal with his red rickshaw, an anachronism from Hong Kong's Suzie Wong days that is now totally out of place in a super-modern city with skyscrapers, luxury cars and a sleek subway system.

He started at 60, sometimes pulling tourists on a short circular route, but mostly just posing for the photographs that travelers take home as mementos. It was a good living, and when tourists were plentiful, he supplemented his meager monthly government pension check with about $100 each day.

But then the tourism industry went into a tailspin, the victim of the declining regional economy, the "bird flu" virus scare, a wave of currency devaluations across Southeast Asia that have made this the most expensive city in the region, and — perhaps most importantly — what some here call a general burnout on Hong Kong after months of hype over its handover last summer to Chinese rule.

Some 792,892 tourists visited in November last year, a drop of 22 percent from November 1996, continuing a downward monthly trend that began after the July 1 handover.

Tourism in 1996 was Hong Kong's largest foreign exchange earner, bringing in some $13.4 billion U.S. dollars.

With fewer tourists, Chan now is thinking what was once for him the unthinkable — giving up his rickshaw and retiring to his native Guangdong Province in southern China. "No tourists are coming to Hong Kong," he said. "And Hong Kong people don't want to use our service, or have a photo taken."

He reaches into the rickshaw, pulls out a dirty towel and gently dabs tears from his eyes. "I will leave Hong Kong next year because it's very difficult to make a living. I think maybe in the next one or two years, there will be no rickshaws in Hong Kong. Life is very difficult."

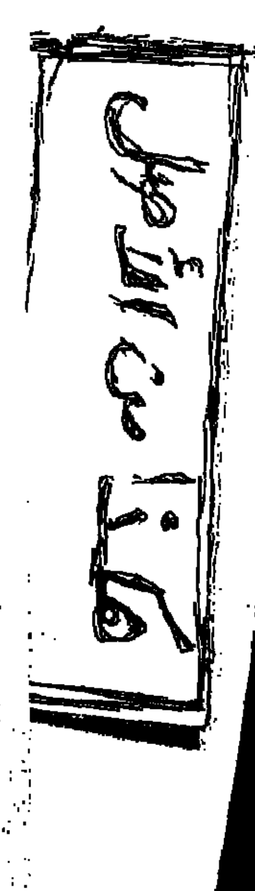
The rickshaw drivers — now numbering only about eight, down from 40 when Chan started — are not the only victims of sluggish tourism.

On tiny Li Yuen Street East, tucked behind the banks and department stores of Queen's Road, vendors selling Chinese silk and leather handbags are feeling the pinch. Tourists used to be their best customers, they said.

"Most of us are suffering," said Yeung Yu-liu, 71, who has been in the same spot for 40 years, selling inexpensive silk neckties. "This is the worst in 40 years," she said.

Government officials and spokesmen for Hong Kong's tourism association predict tourists eventually will return. The association is promoting Hong Kong aggressively overseas, urging residents to talk up the benefits of their city and pushing ideas like a theme park to give visitors something to do besides shop.

"The main time the tourists will come back is in the year 2000," said Yeung Ki Yue. And he should know. Yeung is a Shanghai-trained fortuneteller and astrologer who predicts the future based on the age-old Chinese theory of yin and yang. When he studies the yin and yang of Hong Kong and the five elements that divide it — fire, earth, metal, water and wood — what he sees is that since July 1, the territory has suffered from an awful imbalance. There is too much fire, not enough water.



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Myths and Metaphors of the Vietnam War

Robert Andersen

VIETNAM SHADOWS
The War, Its Ghosts and Its Legacy
By Arnold R. Isaacs
Johns Hopkins. 244 pp. $25.95

IN HIS chapter recounting the lathered crusade to rescue phantom prisoners of war from Vietnam, Arnold Isaacs observes that neither "manipulation nor political flabbiness" could explain the POW campaign's powerful hold on the national psyche. Rather, he writes, "it was some vital piece of America's vision of itself — trust, self-confidence, social order, belief in the benevolence and ordained success of American power — which had disappeared in the mountain mists and vinetangled jungles of Vietnam, and which so many Americans wanted so desperately to get back."

As this incisive volume makes clear, in the mental geography of America, Vietnam now lies forever in ambush. Isaacs, a former Vietnam correspondent whose powerful chronicle of the horrific endgame in Indochina, Without Honor, is to be commended to posterity, here does a valiant job of identifying those ambush sites. Now a professor who teaches the history of the war at Towson State University, he also seeks to explain to later generations why the legacy of Vietnam casts its "long shadow."

Vietnam Shadows addresses the war's myths and metaphors. Written with exemplary detachment for one who was witness to some of the blood baths, it covers a broad range of subjects in what amounts to an extended essay. Here the Vietnam of syndromes, MIA myths, noble causes and ignoble casuistries receives critical scrutiny, while the America of veterans, the Vietnam generation, and the new Americans from Southeast Asia comes into trenchant focus.

What Isaacs lacks in strategy he makes up for in savvy and sensibility. He is a man on a mission, a one-man truth squad, out to do battle with the baseness that would exploit the war for ideological gain. Hence he takes on both the right and left and their respective "fables" about the war.

The military wasn't allowed to win in Vietnam? He cites the smoking gun, namely that the American public "footed more than $150 billion in war costs and gave their military forces the greatest conventional destructive power and the most advanced and expensive technology ever used in the history of war," not to mention "plenty of time to justify those sacrifices with a victory." The anti-war movement won its war against the war? A "sentimental fable." The war in retrospect as noble cause? "Reagan's storybook version of history." Nor is Isaacs a friend of professors who teach their credulous students "partisan mythologies." Indeed, he scores the academy for its "American-centered" lessons, for turning the "war that actually took place" into an "event that occurred chiefly in our own imaginations."

Of course nothing fevered those imaginations more than the search for MIAs or the citation of the war to justify or rule out the other, later uses of military force (depending on whether you approached it from the right or the left). Isaacs recounts those usages in the book's longest, and best, chapters. In doing so, he sheds his detachment long enough to vent his wrath on a "country grown so childlike that it clung to any comforting fiction, no matter how implausible, instead of facing the uncertainties of the human condition and the painful truths of its own past."

Finally, Vietnam Shadows invites us to heed the lesson of Vietnam, the real Vietnam, the land of "ghosts" that Isaacs fleshes out in an overview of its disastrous course since 1975. As attested by the Apocalypse Now bar in Saigon, demographics and deracination have all but obliterated the past. Likewise, bereft of a stake in the psychodrama, the multicultural generation grown up since 1975 in America has brought the war to its ultimate, absurdist conclusion.

This book finds America still in the dark about its recent past, still afraid of its own shadow. Issacs may not have uncovered the legacy writ large, but Vietnam Shadows is journalism of the highest caliber.

Alien Attraction

Elaine Showalter

THE THREAT
The Secret Alien Agenda
By David M. Jacobs
Simon & Schuster. 287 pp. $23

FACES OF THE VISITORS
An Illustrated Reference to Alien Contact
By Kevin Randle and Russ Estes
Simon & Schuster. 308 pp. $12

MILLENNIUM, MESSIAHS, AND MAYHEM
Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements
Edited by Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer
Routledge. 334 pp. Paperback, $18.95

UFO CRASH AT ROSWELL
The Genesis of a Modern Myth
By Benson Saler, Charles A. Ziegler, and Charles B. Moore
Smithsonian. 198 pp. $24.95

IN 1898, in War Of The Worlds, H.G. Wells played masterfully on his culture's *fin de siecle* anxiety with a story of telepathic, blood-sucking Martians landing in suburban London to invade a world they regard as crowded by "inferior animals." In the 1930s, Orson Welles terrified New Jersey with his radio adaptation of the story. Now David M. Jacobs, a professor of history and ufology at Temple University, carries on the tradition, but he doesn't think it's fiction.

In The Threat, Jacobs expounds his view that a race of alien pod-people is about to take over the earth. For decades, he explains, extraterrestrial beings have been carrying out a sustained program of abductions, sperm collection, ova-harvesting, and alien-human crossbreeding. "At the heart of the reproductive agenda," he writes, "is the Breeding Program," using "extrauterine gestational units" that look like brown paper bags to impregnate menopausal women.

Preposterous as Jacobs's theory sounds — and surely millennial social anxieties of intermarriage, immigration, artificial insemination and genetic engineering have something to do with his vision — he presents it with serious intent, and undoubtedly many readers will believe him. Indeed, recent surveys show that 25 percent of all Americans believe that aliens have landed on earth.

In Faces Of The Visitors, Kevin Randle and Russ Estes describe, sketch, and rate the credibility of sightings of over 100 different kinds of alien beings, from reptoids and insectoids to humanoids, indistinguishable from you or me, to sexy Brad Pitt-like "Nordics." Whatever their appearance, most of the aliens are sexual predators; there is even a Midwestern support group for those raped by reptoids.

What we don't have, though, are Polaroids. In fact, there are no photographs, videotapes, or material evidence to prove that any of these Oids exist. Some of David Jacobs's patients (he has studied hypnosis and done over 700 "hypnotic interviews" with abductees) have set up video cameras in their bedrooms to film nighttime abductions, but the cameras seem to fall down or break or show the patients getting up at night and turning them off.

Alien invasion is only one of the many conspiracy theories and apocalyptic scenarios that constitute what the novelist Don DeLillo calls "millennial hysteria." Believers can hitch their scenarios to a multitude of alleged apocalyptic "signs" — AIDS, the breakdown of the family, the Internet. Lubavitcher Hassidic Jews interpreted the Gulf War as a sign of the imminent appearance of the Messiah. Egyptians, as The Washington Post recently reported, interpreted the death of Princess Diana as a British-Israeli conspiracy designed to keep her from marrying a Muslim. But, warn Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer in the introduction to their excellent Millennium, Messiahs, And Mayhem, apocalyptic thinking can "become dangerous when actual events appear markedly convergent with the anticipated scenarios of zealots." The recent massacre of 70 tourists in Egypt is partly the result of widespread cultural support of xenophobic conspiracy theories.

The contributors to Millennium, Messiahs And Mayhem analyze contemporary religious and secular apocalyptic movements from the Mormons to Waco and Aum Shinrikyo, and explain the central significance of prophecy in these movements. Prophecies are useful because they enhance the charismatic authority and power of the leader, bind the followers together, and make leaving the group seem risky. Paradoxically, even "failed prophecy" or "apparent prophetic failure" can unify millenarian groups. David G. Bromley notes that "apocalyptic intensity can be maintained through predictions that are imminent but indeterminate, which then necessitates and legitimates a constant state of readiness." No amount of counter-evidence, testimony by scientific panels, or contradictory hypotheses can shake these firmly held beliefs and suspicions. In fact, as anthropologists of religion have demonstrated, disconfirmed prophecy leads to intensified faith and proselytizing, as believers seek "dissonance reduction" through disclaimers, rationalizations, and self-congratulation that their faith has saved them.

With regard to the alien invasion stories, anthropologists have also analyzed the role of folklore, myth, and media in the construction of narrative. In UFO Crash At Roswell, cultural anthropologists Benson Saler and Charles A. Ziegler, along with atmospheric physicist Charles B. Moore, trace the process by which the belief that a manned flying saucer had landed in New Mexico in 1947 became a contemporary "technomyth" expressing "anti-government sentiment."

The authors offer a useful vocabulary and terminology for understanding the formation of myth, in a "process of transfiguration that involved successive retellings in which some of the historically recorded events were retained, some were distorted or repressed, and entirely new elements were inserted."

Most important, the authors argue, when tales move from the oral to the written tradition, the process by which narrators rationalize internal contradictions and implausibilities accelerates. When tales are written down or "personal legends" are collected and edited, they increasingly conform to prevailing narrative concepts, introduce elements of fantasy, intensify relations of dominance and subjugation, play down the shocking and unpleasant, transpose subplots, and rationalize discrepancies.

All of these elements are present in David Jacobs's retelling of the stories he heard in interviews with his patients, almost all of whom are women. They are stories of displaced sexual desire, romantic fantasy, and reproductive ambivalence. Many have had hysterectomies, and yet they tell of alien insemination and being forced to conceive an alien child. Could it be that they are mourning lost fertility, fearing lost sexuality? Although they sometimes express distress at their rapes, and at feelings of sexual arousal they wish to disown, the more unpleasant aspects of imagining forced sex with an alien are played down, and the emotional satisfactions played up.

Sympathetically understood, The Threat is a sort of apocalyptic version of The Rules, a sad statement of women's unmet needs for love, sexual attention, and adventure.

ILLUSTRATION: MICHAEL SLOAN

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 1 1998

Le Monde

Russia's PM bounces back to the top

Sophie Shihab in Moscow

THE Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, must be savouring his revenge. After months of having to listen to praise being heaped on the so-called "young reformers" in the government — Boris Nemtsov, aged 38, and Anatoly Chubais, aged 42 — Chernomyrdin, "old" at 59, was given a heart-warming reception by President Boris Yeltsin at the Kremlin on January 19.

Although the two men who now symbolise the neoliberal, new-look Russia were also present, Yeltsin made it clear he was bringing down the curtain on the era of simplistic reformist solutions, and paid tribute to Chernomyrdin's experience.

Yeltsin had just returned from a six-week spell in hospital. His recent health problems seem to have made the 66-year-old president a more cautious political animal. He transferred various powers from Nemtsov and Chubais to Chernomyrdin, thus implicitly confirming that the prime minister is one of his potential successors or at least a kingmaker.

Up to that moment the unofficial "heir" had been Nemtsov, a man seen as capable of raising the moral standards of Russian capitalism.

Yeltsin humiliated Chernomyrdin last March when he promoted Nemtsov and Chubais. "Don't worry, they won't intrigue against you," he quipped at the time, causing the media to speculate that the ageing *apparatchik* might soon be for the chop.

But by the autumn it had become clear that it was the "young reformers" who risked being out of a job. In November Chubais lost the finance ministry, and Nemtsov the energy ministry. Although they both continued to supervise those two key ministries in their capacity as deputy prime ministers, this has no longer been the case since January 16, when Chernomyrdin announced that the government was to be reorganised.

The new energy and finance ministers now answer directly to the prime minister. This, according to the daily newspaper Izvestia, has made Chernomyrdin "almost as powerful a figure as the president, with the latter's blessing".

Some media pundits believe that Yeltsin and his new entourage, under the influence of bankers who are Chubais's enemies, have decided that Chernomyrdin should shoulder an increasing share of the president's responsibilities. There is no doubt that Yeltsin is now a weak man. Pictures of him gingerly driving a snow scooter prompted an opposition newspaper to suggest that he looked like "an old man in his second childhood". Yeltsin's trip to Italy is still on, but a visit to India has been cancelled.

The crunch will come with the president's annual speech to parliament in late February or early March. In an initial draft of the speech, obtained by the pro-reformist newspaper Russkiy Telegraf, Yeltsin is sarcastic about the reformers, mocking for example their pride at having achieved higher than forecast revenues from privatisation and pointing out that "what has been sold cannot be sold a second time".

A more predictable charge, however, seems to have been omitted from the speech and was left unexploited by the two TV channels controlled by bankers who have been campaigning against Chubais and Nemtsov for months: their failure to keep their promise to let government employees have all their pay arrears by the end of 1997.

The two men say they have fulfilled their part of the deal and accuse local authorities of misappropriating federal funds sent out to the regions for that purpose. But unpaid teachers and doctors are surely entitled to expect the government to ensure its word is obeyed throughout the country.

If Yeltsin is reluctant to make an issue of this sore point, it is because he still wants to use his young ministers. Were there to be even stronger pressure from bankers and other lobbies opposed to the reforms of Nemtsov and Chubais, Yeltsin could always sacrifice one of them at the next session of the government's annual report on its activities, due to be held in February.

(January 20)

Viktor Chernomyrdin (right) with the Duma's speaker, Gennady Selezynov. President Yeltsin has implicitly confirmed the Russian prime minister as his successor PHOTOGRAPH: VIKTOR KOROTAYEV

Turkey's Islamists assert their identity

Nicole Pope in Kayseri

THE leaders of the pro-Islamist Welfare party in Kocasinan, one of the two districts of the Anatolian city of Kayseri, were meeting, as they do every Tuesday, to discuss local politics, exchange news about social developments in their neighbourhoods, and prepare for the local elections that are due to take place in just over a year.

All 24 men were aware that their party would probably be banned by the constitutional court before their next weekly meeting [the ban was announced on January 16], but the issue was barely touched upon. They all felt that they had a mission to fulfil and that their work would continue as before.

"We all know each other," said Saban Bayrak, president of Welfare's provincial organisation. "We have complete lists of our members. Meetings will continue, but elsewhere."

Since 1994 Kayseri, in eastern Cappadocia, has had an Islamist mayor, Sukru Karatepe. He was sent to prison for a year last October because of his declared reluctance to take part in this year's ceremonies to mark the 60th anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of Turkey's secular republic.

Welfare, which has 93,000 members in the province, controls the three municipalities of Kayseri, which has 1 million inhabitants. It got 32 per cent of the province's vote in the 1995 general election.

Kayseri is a quietly prosperous city, with broad avenues and clean pavements. It has rapidly become industrialised in recent years thanks to the efforts of entrepreneurs nicknamed the "tigers of Anatolia", who proudly describe themselves as conservative, religious and nationalist.

"In big cities like Istanbul and Ankara, there is a more cosmopolitan élite that has forgotten its traditions. We are closer to our roots, to the culture and religion of Anatolia," says Mustafa Tekeli, head of Musiad, an association of Muslim businessmen.

This affirmation of identity, which secular Turkey sees as contrary to the modernity preached by Atatürk, along with commercial competition with companies that have been established in cities for decades, has caused tensions between the local Muslim community and the secularist central authorities.

Yet the Muslims of Kayseri apparently have more in common with the Republican religious right in the United States than with Iranian revolutionaries; and they say they are loyal to the regime. "We're democratic Muslims, but we want our way of thinking to be respected," says Tekeli.

They do not reject the West — where they do business — but are determined not to sacrifice their own customs in exchange for a culture imported mainly from Europe and the US.

One person who has been energetically trying to change Welfare's reactionary image is Nevin Akyurt, the first woman admitted to the party's executive in the province. "People think we take orders from men," she says angrily. "If I had been regarded as second class by virtue of being a woman, I wouldn't have stayed more than half an hour in the party. Welfare is the only party where women are respected and regularly consulted."

Now head of the women's wing of the party, which includes 25,000 voluntary workers, Akyurt is convinced women have a key role to play within the movement that will not be changed by the banning of Welfare.

Welfare's networks are probably well-structured and disciplined enough to withstand the constitutional court's ban.

Despite their efforts to maintain a dialogue, Welfare and the city council do not enjoy the support of the whole population of Kayseri. Secularists are convinced the party wants to introduce a religious regime. "I work for the council, but I don't like them," says one young man. "They sell their land to their supporters and want to overthrow the regime."

Some conservative Muslims are irritated by Welfare's political activism. "I always used to practise my religion without any problem," says Turan, a carpet dealer. "Now, because of them, all believers face a tense situation."

It is obvious, however, that government institutions will find it difficult to impose the official ideology, and in particular the concept of secularism, on the inhabitants of this booming city. As Akyurt says: "They can ban the party, but they won't be able to change people's ideas."

(January 18-19)

Indonesia needs new leadership

EDITORIAL

THREE countries caught up in the turmoil that has hit the economies of the East Asia — Indonesia, Thailand and South Korea — have received massive help from the International Monetary Fund. Of the three, Indonesia is the poorest and most shaky.

In both Thailand and South Korea, a clear determination to overcome the economic crisis has been shown by newly elected governments which have been judged by voters to be best equipped to do so.

The situation in Indonesia is radically different. President Suharto holds personal power and is propped up by institutions tailored to his purposes. It was only after much prevarication that he pledged to get to grips with the crisis.

On January 20 it was announced that, at the age of 76, Suharto intends to stand for a seventh term as president. He will doubtless be re-elected on March 10 by Indonesia's tame People's Consultative Assembly.

It is difficult to see how the country will benefit from his re-election. After all those years during which he abdicated his responsibilities, is he really the right man to put an end to the monopolies, cartels and interests he represents?

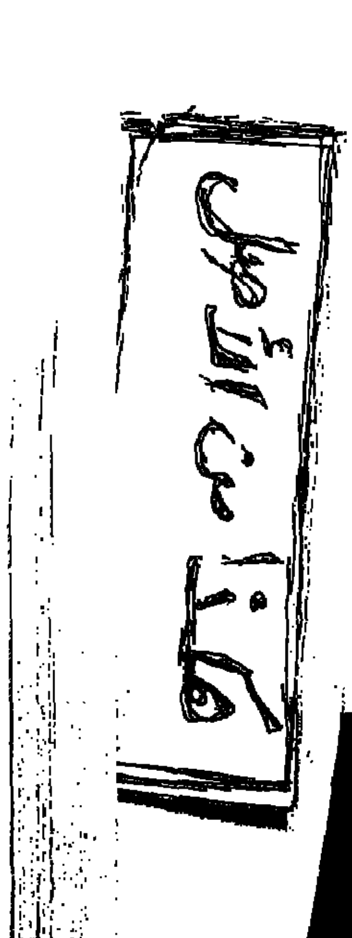
It would be an oversimplification to contend that Suharto has rendered no services to his country. When, in the late sixties, he took control of the sprawling archipelago, which had been traumatised by a bloodbath and was teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and anarchy, he started by putting the nation back on its feet.

In the course of his six presidential terms, however, Indonesia's steady growth has been increasingly accompanied by rampant nepotism, corruption and privilege. The country's hidebound institutions have become less receptive to the demands of the underprivileged and the emerging urban middle classes. The opposition has been sidelined. Accumulated frustration has led to several outbursts of violence. Public opinion no longer believes the government to be capable of reforming its ways.

So far Suharto has blithely dismissed all criticism. By signing the IMF's second rescue plan on January 15, he made it clear he was going to handle the economic recovery himself.

But his programme contains no political reforms. The country's ills are political rather than economic. The Indonesians could do with a blast of fresh air. There is dire need for a new leadership without any connections to the business world, of the kind that has emerged in Thailand and South Korea. One thing is absolutely clear: Suharto has had his day.

(January 21)



Spectacular view of the Nile

Robert Solé

THE department of Egyptian antiquities at the Louvre in Paris contains one of the finest collections of its kind in the world. It has just been given an ambitious and extensive facelift that allows a greater number of its 50,000-plus items to be exhibited than before. The new design espouses the educational approach adopted by Jean-François Champollion (1790-1832), curator of the Louvre's original Egyptian museum, which opened in 1826.

It is widely believed that the Louvre's first Egyptian treasures were brought back from the Nile Valley by Napoleon's Commission of Sciences and Arts at the end of the 18th century. This is not true: the members of the commission who accompanied the eastern army left Egypt virtually empty-handed. Most of their trophies had been confiscated by the British, among them the celebrated Rosetta Stone, which ended up in the British Museum.

It was Champollion who provided the royal museum's Egyptian department with its first collections a quarter of a century later. The museum opened officially on May 15, 1826, in an atmosphere of Egyptomania. Champollion had achieved the extraordinary feat of deciphering the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone, thus giving a voice to a civilisation that had remained mute for 13 centuries.



Champollion: deciphered the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone

The Egyptian department — which contained a few statues and objects from old royal collections — got off to a flying start thanks to 2,150 items from the Durand collection, which was acquired in 1824. These included amulets, figurines, jewellery, vases, sarcophagi and some fine stelae.

That same year France allowed a magnificent treasure trove to slip through its hands — the collection of the French consul in Egypt, Bernardino Drovetti, which had been bought by the King of Sardinia and moved to Turin. Louis XVIII had thought it too expensive. In those days, antique-collecting consuls were able to hire teams of excavators to comb Egyptian sites with the blessing of the local authorities.

In 1826 Champollion discovered in Livorno, Italy, the collection of Henry Salt, the British consul in Egypt, which contained 4,000 items, including the great Tanis sphinx, the statue of Amenophis IV, and the pink granite sarcophagus of Rameses III.

He immediately wrote to Charles X to persuade him to buy the collection. This time the king said yes. Permission was also given to acquire the second Drovetti collection, which consisted of 500 items, including a colossal effigy of Rameses II and some gold masterpieces.

Champollion had deciphered the hieroglyphs, but had not yet visited Egypt. He eventually went there in 1828 at the head of a Franco-Tuscan mission. The several months that he spent in Egypt were extremely fruitful, and he returned with some exceptional objects, such as the statue of Karomama and the sarcophagus of the priest Jedhor, which he promptly added to "his" museum. The museum had unfortunately been given a Greco-Roman decor, and it was too late to change anything.

The Egyptian department of the Louvre was nevertheless revolutionary in its design: Champollion wanted not just to create an art museum, but to recreate every aspect of Egyptian civilisation. So, alongside the deities and kings, he displayed meticulously classified objects from everyday life, both public and private.

Champollion died young, in 1832, leaving the science of Egyptology rudderless. The museum entered a long period of lethargy. It was not until the mid-19th century that it received new acquisitions, such as the 2,600 pieces from the Clot Bey collection and the treasures of the Serapeum in Memphis brought back by Auguste Mariette.

MARIETTE, a humble employee of the Louvre who became passionately interested in Egypt, was dispatched to the Nile Valley to bring back Coptic manuscripts. "I didn't find any manuscripts," he said afterwards. "I didn't draw up the inventory of any library. But, stone by stone, I brought back a temple."

He had unearthed the Serapeum, a huge complex buried in the sand. Within the space of two years, some 6,000 items found their way into the Louvre. They included the famous seated Scribe and the monumental Apis Bull.

While many pieces were given exit visas from Egypt, others were smuggled to Paris by travellers who went to fill their pockets at Saqqara. That did not stop Mariette becoming an implacable defender of the Egyptian heritage a few years later, when he was appointed director of antiquities in Cairo.

During the second half of the 19th century, finds were shared out between the teams of excavators and the Egyptian state. The Louvre benefited greatly from this arrangement thanks to the work of scholars at the Cairo School, which Gaston Maspero founded in 1880, and which later became the French Institute of Archaeology.



Senynefer and his wife, in the Louvre collection

In the twenties Egypt became aware of the exceptional wealth of its heritage and began to allow only a trickle of items to leave the country. That policy was implemented by the Frenchmen who successively headed the antiquities department in Cairo.

The Louvre collection continued to increase in two ways. It received state-owned objects, such as some of the Egyptian coins in the Cabinet des Médailles in 1907, and the Musée Guimet's Egyptian treasures in 1946.

The Louvre also received private donations, some of them very large. Louise Atherton and Ingeborg Curtis, for example, gave it 1,500 items of value, including the stela of Princess Nefert-Iabet. Egypt itself made a generous donation in [illegible] — the colossal bust of Amenophis IV — to thank France for its help in salvaging the Nubian monuments.

Were Champollion alive today, he would certainly have difficulty recognising "his" museum. But given the considerable enlargement of the collection (which has risen from 9,000 pieces to more than 50,000), the improvement of the exhibition rooms and above all the clear intention to make a coherent and instructive ensemble out of the department's latest transformation, he would be unlikely to feel he had been betrayed.

(December 20)

Pharaohs seen in the best possible light

Frédéric Edelmann and **Emmanuel de Roux** on the new design of the Louvre's Egyptian section

THE people who designed the initial Egyptian rooms of the Louvre, with their grey friezes and glossy painted ceilings, did not worry their heads too much about juxtaposing Ancient Egyptian and French aesthetics.

Today, however, it would seem incongruous to place the effigy of a pharaoh beneath a Louis XIV panelled ceiling. Matters are further complicated when it becomes necessary not only to exhibit major works from a civilisation completely different from France's own, but to preserve the history of a museography that is more than 100 years old, and to respect the building's former function as a royal palace.

Those were the problems that faced the architects — Dominique Brard, Olivier Lebras and Marc Quelen — who designed the Louvre's new rooms devoted to the Egypt of the Pharaohs. The route that visitors take through the Egyptian section begins with the statue of a kneeling Nakhthorheb, vizier of the 26th dynasty (about 595-589 BC), on the ground floor.

They continue eastwards along the south side of the Pavillon des Arts, turn left along the east wing, go up to the first floor and return in the direction they came without ever retracing their steps. By the end, they will have visited 30 rooms and looked at 5,000 works produced by four millennia of civilisation.

The department's curators, headed by Christiane Ziegler, were delighted to get 60 per cent more space. But the architects had somehow to "fit in" with several different types of décor and architecture.

The Egyptian department, as they found it, began with rooms that were redesigned in 1930, and continued with a section where a celebrated pair of architects, Pierre-François Fontaine and Charles Percier, recarved and complemented some "historic" but disparate woodwork in the early 19th century.

The department ended with the original Egyptian museum created by Jean-François Champollion, a splendid work in itself, but one that conjured up a picture of Egypt regarded as debatable by modern archaeologists.

Preservation was a priority. This meant that the architects needed to give unity and consistency to something that constituted one of several quasi-autonomous museums within the Grand Louvre. They also had to take into account Ziegler's wish to break new ground in this shrine of sheer aesthetic delight and evoke the everyday working life of Egyptians through such objects as the scribe's tablet and the farmer's hoe.

A straightforward principle was adopted: at ground level there would be a thematic route enclosed by light-coloured walls, and on the first floor a chronological sequence using colours as markers. Put another way, archaeological science would predominate downstairs, and masterpieces seen in their historical context would take pride of place upstairs.

And so it has turned out. The route begins with a succession of brightly lit spaces lined with recesses displaying archaeological objects that tell us a lot about Egyptian civilisation while at the same time being a pleasure on the eye.

The centrepiece of each thematic group — the Nile, work in the fields, writing, the household, etc — consists of a major work that reinforces the theme.

Sometimes it is hard to differentiate between the "flagship" object and the more modest, purely illustrative exhibit.

In the chronological section upstairs, in each room, the curators and architects juggle with such concepts as emptiness, rarity and fullness. The sheer accumulation of objects intentionally crammed into showcases gives a strong impression of wealth and power.

A highly distinctive feature of Egyptian art is that much of the sculpture, whatever its size or purpose, has a very marked architectural dimension. The statuary, whether it is a granite colossus or a funerary statuette, whether it depicts Osiris or Rameses, is always on the verge of clashing with the design of the museum, except when it is allowed to reverberate on the same wavelength.

The curators point out that the sobriety of their layout was "also dictated by the very nature of Egyptian art, whose meaning and force need to be served by a spare museography". The trouble is that the architecture and museography of the renovated rooms cannot easily achieve an asceticism of that kind, caught as they are between the weightiness of the works and the ponderousness of the old Louvre.

At times, though, there is perfect harmony: the stone-lined spaces containing unfinished sculptures left by Percier and Fontaine behind Claude Perrault's mysterious Colonnade have been used with great intelligence to display, among other things, the huge unrolled papyrus of a Book of the Dead.

In this labyrinthine nook of the Louvre, the visitor may well feel lost; Egypt, for its part, probably feels very much at home.

(December 20)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

EU's Third World trade partners face testing times

Charlotte Denny

FOR more than 20 years a group of former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific have benefited from a trade deal giving them preferential access to European Union markets. But the Lomé convention, negotiated during the 1970s when many European countries felt a residual sense of responsibility towards their former colonies, is being renegotiated in a climate which is much less sympathetic to special deals for poor countries.

Lomé's rules do not accord with those of the World Trade Organisation, which now runs global trade relations. The WTO's first principle is that countries should deal with each other on an even-handed basis — that is, no special deals. Caribbean banana exporters who depend on favourable access to European markets were the first to feel the chill winds of the new world order. In August last year, the EU lost its appeal against a WTO ruling in favour of the banana-growers of Central America, who argued that the EU's quotas for Caribbean bananas infringed WTO rules.

Reports suggest the farmers in the Windward Isles have got the message about diversification and global competition. Some have chosen to diversify into marijuana, which will not please the United States, the dollar banana-growers' backer in the WTO case.

Lomé has always had its critics. It has failed to help members diversify their export markets and increase their share of European trade; some of the poorest nations are also excluded.

The 71 African, Caribbean and Pacific (known collectively as ACP) states party to Lomé are divided along 20-year-old guidelines, somewhat arbitrarily, into "least-developed" and "non least-developed". Western Samoa is counted as "least-developed" despite having a per capita income nearly two-and-half times greater than Ghana, which does not qualify as a "least-developed" nation.

These distinctions matter. The 41 "least-developed" Lomé member states will probably come through the process of renegotiation with favourable access intact. The WTO allows "special and different" treatment of the poorest countries. The headache the European Commission faces is what to do about the 29 countries who are classified as "not least-developed" but which nevertheless contain nearly 70 million people living below the global poverty line.

The commission's initial proposal is that ACP countries form free-trade areas with Europe that could be registered under existing WTO rules. This would allow the EU to continue to offer these countries lower tariffs — but the catch is that in return they would have to open up their markets to European companies.

This would be a disaster, according to Phil Bloomer, senior policy analyst for Oxfam. Competitive European companies would be pitted against fragile infant industries in the ACP countries. Worse, their agriculture sector would be competing with Europe's subsidy-bloated farmers. The adjustment costs of exposing these countries' domestic markets to competition from Europe would be huge, even with the maximum 10-year phasing-in time allowed by the WTO.

Britain — which holds the EU presidency during the period in which the union must agree its negotiating mandate for Lomé — has a chance to secure a better deal for the ACP countries.

Oxfam believes Europe should opt for a waiver under WTO rules, allowing the Lomé convention to continue for another 10 years. By 2010, other multilateral agreements will have eroded the value of many of Lomé's preferences anyway.

In the intervening decade, Europe should concentrate on helping its ACP partners to develop the capacity to compete more effectively through technology transfers and investment in education. Once they are ready to deal with the world on a more even footing, it could be time to reconsider building some reciprocal trade agreements. But not before then.

● The Paris Club, whose members include the UK, the US and most major European countries, announced last week that it would not bend its rules on debt forgiveness to come up with the extra $350 million needed to get Mozambique's debts down to a sustainable level. However, it did agree on an 80 per cent cut in line with the club's rules.

Aid agencies denounced the decision, saying it threatened the future of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. Many of the 20 or so countries on the list for debt relief will require debt forgiveness in excess of the 80 per cent rule.

Will Brown dip into his crock of gold?

Larry Elliott considers the Chancellor's options in his upcoming Budget

THE number of truly memorable Budgets this century can be counted on the fingers of one hand. There was Lloyd George's People's Budget of 1909, Churchill's fateful decision to return to the gold standard in 1925, Hugh Dalton's indiscretion on the way into the Commons in 1947 and Geoffrey Howe's squeeze in 1981.

But Gordon Brown's Budget on St Patrick's Day is still an important date in the political calendar. The Chancellor has many cards stacked in his favour: the fiscal position is strong, Labour has a huge majority and it is the start of a parliament — ideal conditions for structural reform.

There is one other factor. With the Bank of England now setting interest rates, the Chancellor is able to devote all of his considerable energy to thinking of ways to use fiscal policy to pursue microeconomic reform. So what might his first real Budget look like?

It is perhaps easier to start by saying what it will not look like. At a guess, there will be no real attempt to use the Budget as an instrument of demand management, since the new orthodoxy is that the macroeconomic effect of fiscal policy is limited. There will be no reneging on the manifesto pledges on income-tax rates, nor on the commitment to meet spending targets bequeathed by the Tories.

But how will Mr Brown make an impact? One idea is to produce a Budget for children, based on Labour's central themes of tackling poverty and raising educational standards. Having decided on his big idea, all the Chancellor has to do is produce proposals to flesh it out.

First, Mr Brown has to find a way of explaining to the public why healthy public finances will be used in the coming years to pay off the national debt, rather than to keep hospital wards open and bring down class sizes. On even gloomy assumptions about growth, the Government's budgetary position is stupendously strong.

Mr Brown's argument is that debt interest payments are crowding out other spending, representing an implied tax increase for the next generation of taxpayers — and are thus a betrayal of our children. But the projections are for the GDP/debt ratio to fall, so that is unlikely to cut much ice.

So, point two would have to be a commitment to spend more on education — not only because it is the Government's priority but because, as the green budget published last week by Goldman Sachs and the Institute for Fiscal Studies showed, spending on education has been declining while health and social security budgets have soared.

Mr Brown should make it clear there will be a redistribution of spending in favour of schools, and that for the remainder of this Parliament there will be real increases of around 3 per cent a year.

The Prime Minister and the Chancellor should have no problems with such a commitment. They, and other senior ministers, also seem united on the need to target help on deprived parts of the country where educational attainment has been weak.

One of the more interesting ideas to come out of the Government's first year in office is the plan to set up special action zones in the poorest regions and channel resources into primary education, healthcare, training, job-creation and small firms, rather than benefits.

This could be a real breakthrough. It recognises that the welfare-to-work strategy needs to be based on helping communities as well as individuals; stresses that the root cause of poverty is not individual but economic failure; and highlights the role of the public sector where the private sector has failed.

A team of 20 Treasury officials has been accumulating evidence of the extent of the problem for the past two months, and ways of injecting funds into rundown areas are being explored.

Senior government sources say they are working towards a "comprehensive strategy" to dovetail with the action plans offered in the New Deal for the unemployed. Strictly speaking, the action zones are part of the comprehensive spending review, but the Chancellor is sure to invoke them in his Budget and assure MPs that extra money will be found for them. That is point three.

The fourth leg of the strategy is the introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). This will be the most significant tax reform of the Budget. Mr Brown believes critics fail to recognise that the labour market is not static but dynamic, and that help via pay packets will improve both take-up and incentives. He argues that helping the low-paid is a crucial way to tackle child poverty.

One other attraction of the tax credit to a Chancellor keen on exploring fresh avenues of redistribution is that it could be used as a mechanism for targeting the majority of future tax cuts at the low-paid.

Finally, the Chancellor might be thinking of some specific measures for childcare, particularly after the furore over proposed cuts to the single-parent benefit. One of the more obvious options would be for the WFTC to include a specific payment for childcare — which would then be aimed directly at low-paid workers.

Will all of this happen? Almost certainly not. Budgets are always different from their billing. Will some of it happen? Quite probably, if the Government means what it says about tackling poverty at source. But the real question, of course, is whether this package — or a similar one — would do any good. It may be that handing over monetary policy to the Bank of England at a time of global deflation will prove to be 1925 revisited. But at least there are some good ideas floating around in the Treasury, and they might just work.

In Brief

COMPAQ continued its drive to become one of the world's top computer makers when it unveiled an agreed $9.6 billion takeover of Digital Equipment Corporation in the industry's biggest deal to date. It will create a group with combined turnover of nearly $38 billion, placing it fifth behind Hewlett Packard.

TWO top government officials in Japan were arrested for accepting lavish entertainment from banks in return for tipping them about inspections.

HONG KONG'S Cathay Pacific Airways sacked 760 staff, 5 per cent of its workforce, because of the Asian crisis.

BRITAIN'S poorer regions may lose European aid under confidential proposals from Brussels — because the country's unemployment rate is too low. Meanwhile figures released by the Office for National Statistics show that growth in the UK economy slowed to 0.5 per cent in the final quarter of 1997.

THE UK is to carry out a six-month inquiry into Britain's semi-independent offshore tax havens of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man in an attempt to tackle money laundering and financial crime, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, revealed.

MORE than $660 million was wiped off the stock market value of EMI, the music group whose artists include the Rolling Stones and Tina Turner, after it warned profits would fall $40 million below expectations.

FIDELITY Brokerage Services, the UK retail stockbroking arm of the world's largest fund manager, is to close following an "extensive strategic review". The decision affects 260 jobs and and about 15,000 clients.

LAND-ROVER is to create 400 jobs at its Solihull plant on top of the 300 announced last year, to boost production of its baby four-wheel-drive vehicle, the Freelander.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates January 27	Sterling rates January 20
Australia	2.4714-2.4747	2.4481-2.4453
Austria	20.86-20.88	21.12-21.14
Belgium	61.19-61.29	61.94-62.04
Canada	2.4012-2.4035	2.3496-2.3519
Denmark	11.30-11.31	11.43-11.44
France	9.931-9.939	10.05-10.06
Germany	2.9664-2.9690	3.0027-3.0059
Hong Kong	12.84-12.85	12.66-12.67
Ireland	1.1782-1.1802	1.1858-1.907
Italy	2,926-2,929	2,953-2,956
Japan	209.17-209.43	210.63-210.88
Netherlands	3.3428-3.3460	3.3844-3.3873
New Zealand	2.8265-2.8316	2.7696-2.7746
Norway	12.31-12.33	12.36-12.38
Portugal	303.56-303.91	306.99-307.34
Spain	251.65-251.88	254.48-254.80
Sweden	13.12-13.13	13.15-13.17
Switzerland	2.4082-2.4113	2.4606-2.4536
USA	1.6583-1.6593	1.6352-1.6362
ECU	1.5047-1.5065	1.5176-1.5195

FTSE100 Share index down [illegible] at [illegible]. FTSE 250 index down 38.1 at 4794.7. Gold up $17.00 at $[illegible].

Three Somali Programme Posts

Oxfam's Somali programme currently consists of two main parts. In Somaliland the focus is on rehabilitation of rural water supply and health education, community managed credit schemes and the training of Traditional Birth Attendants. In Lower Shebelle, there is a 3-month integrated public health emergency programme in response to recent massive flooding. Further areas of activity are being considered, taking into account the needs of vulnerable communities, especially returnees, displaced and pastoralists. Oxfam is seeking well experienced candidates to meet the challenges of 3 key posts:-

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OR National salary + relocation allowance

Responsible for: developing clear analysis and coherent strategy for relief and rehabilitation programme in Somalia/land; for emergency preparedness, appropriate and timely emergency response; co-ordinating with international groups on policy and advocacy work, liaising with relevant governmental officials and leaders; and ensuring the programme achieves maximum impact and effectiveness.
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Programme Manager for Somaliland

Based in Hargeisa - unaccompanied post **One year contract**

Salary £16,034 (UK non-taxable)

+ accommodation and reasonable living expenses

Responsible for: overall effective strategy and management of Oxfam's relief, rehabilitation and development programme in Somaliland; representing Oxfam and liaising with local authorities, international and national organisations, as well as grassroots counterparts implementing security guidelines.
Please quote ref: OS/PM/SOM/AD/G.

Finance and Administration Manager for Somaliland

Based in Hargeisa - unaccompanied post **One year contract**

Salary £16,034 (UK non-taxable)

+ accommodation and reasonable living expenses

Responsible for: establishing rigorous financial accounting and reporting systems; standardising personnel management procedures; managing office staff and training them in finance and administrative systems, establishing an effective management structure, dealing with staff issues; deputising for Programme Manager.
Please quote ref: OS/FAM/SOM/AD/G.

For further details and an application form please send a large stamped addressed envelope to International Human Resources, Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ, UK, quoting the appropriate reference. CVs alone will not be accepted. Closing date for all 3 posts: 2 March 1998. Interviews during week of 16th March 1998.

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For a full job description and application form please contact Nicholas Richards, CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, LONDON SW9 9TY (Tel: 00 44 171 733 7900 ext 888 Fax: 00 44 171 274 9630, email: nrichard@cafod.org.uk). Please quote ref HAS .Closes: 16 February 1998.

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Abbreviations: P - Professor; AP - Associate Professor; ASP - Assistant Professor; SL - Senior Lecturer; L - Lecturer; AL - Associate Lecturer; PDF - Postdoctoral Fellowship

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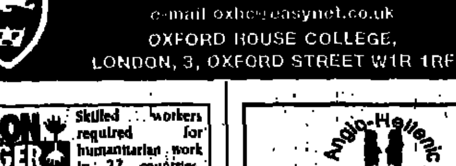


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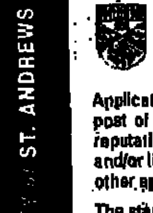
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CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE

President Clinton may have betrayed his wife, but the worst of his crimes, argues **Barbara Ehrenreich**, is that he betrayed his fellow boomers, who liked sex and pot but had more important things on their minds

How Bill screwed his generation

THE Monica Lewinsky crisis throws a new light on that enigmatic photo of Bill and Hillary, their generous flesh covered only in bathing suits, mock-waltzing together on the beach in St Thomas, in the Virgin Islands. Despite the first couple's coy complaints about invasion of privacy during their New Year vacation, almost everyone assumed the shot had been cleverly posed by some subaltern employed by the president's anti-Paula Jones publicity campaign. After all, in real life, what amorously inclined, privacy-deprived couple — finding themselves nearly nude in a gorgeously lonely spot — would leap to their feet, whistling Strauss?

But now that we know that the president, insufficiently chastened by Jones's charges of sexual harassment, has, in all likelihood, been carrying on with every female within grabbing distance — who is to say that he was not simultaneously romancing Hillary too? A man of such gargantuan appetites might easily, in the odd moment of need, mistake his own wife for a bimbo.

Technically speaking, it is not yet a crime in the United States for a man, even a married one, to have sex with a consenting 21-year-old. The legal snare lies in the accusation that Clinton urged Lewinsky to lie about their affair under oath, should Jones's lawyers subpoena her to help establish the president's alleged runaway priapism. But if Clinton is impeached, the real issue will not be the mere "suborning" of a witness, but America's entire "culture war" over sex, sexuality, and various other pathways to pleasure.

For years now, the right has been inching ahead in our civil war over "culture" and morality, leaving the US in the grip of a pitilessly puritanical backlash. The tragedy is that Clinton might once have been able to turn this backlash around — if only, as in so many other issue areas, he had been brave as well as cute and smart.

Clinton, like the rest of the boomers, grew up in a society that was far more indulgent of male philandering. In John F Kennedy's time, as has often been noted, men of power actually gained points by guzzling and grabbing. Certainly it did not seem to hurt JFK that dozens of his aides and secret service officers witnessed his trysts with whole pools full of babes at a time, or so Seymour Hirsch reports in The Dark Side Of Camelot.

In the culture of the early sixties, executive men in grey flannel routinely lapped up their martini lunches, leered at the hat-check gal, and staggered back to the office to pinch their secretaries' butts. All this was considered fine manly behaviour and evidence of unobstructed testosterone flow. In an era when gay men were portrayed as limp-wristed "fairies", it may even have helped to be known as an energetic pursuer of women.

The influx of women into the workforce, beginning in the sixties, was bound to challenge the male conception of the office as play-pen, even if that office was the Oval one. It was not that women, or their feminist spokespersons, like sex any less than men, or that all women are at all times disgusted by the leering attentions of males. In some settings, in fact, we welcome and even encourage them. But the workplace is different. We go there to get a job done, and unless that job is lap-dancing, it's an insult to be judged by one's body parts and willingness to share them.

Feminists outlawed sexual harassment to clear the way for women's economic advancement, which is, among other things, an essential ingredient for women's liberation in the sexual realm as well. Sure, some charges of sexual harassment occasionally seem, even to this hardline feminist, a little on the over-sensitive side. But even men don't appreciate unsolicited intimacies in public settings — which is why, if you want to insult a German or French man who is not a close friend or family member, you start by addressing him as *du* or *tu*.

It wasn't feminism, though, that undid Clinton. He seems genuinely comfortable around women, even those of the non-babe variety; he appoints them to high positions; he has stood his ground on abortion rights despite what must be powerful daily temptations to defect. As a result, organised feminism has remained by his side through every "bimbo eruption" so far, adopting a Hillary-like stance as the ever upbeat and oblivious spouse.

When Jones surfaced with her accusation of crude sexual harassment in 1993, the National Organisation for Women muttered darkly about rightwing conspiracies and tactfully averted its gaze. A few feminists (myself included) were distressed by NOW's stand-by-your-man forbearance: if sexual harassment is a crime, it's a crime even when nice-guy Democrats do it to right-leaning women.

Still, you could argue that there was always something good-natured about Bill's derelictions. No one has produced credible evidence that, for example, Jones failed, as charged, to get a promotion because she rejected his advances. And it is not true, as Lewinsky's lawyer William Ginsburg weirdly opined last week, that if Clinton did indeed have sex with his client, he must be a "misogynist". If anything, he likes women far too much for his own fragile powers of self-control. The brain says no, but again and again, the groin says go.

But Clinton's problem is not just that he is a man, a married man, or even a married man who happens to be the president of the United States. In the cultural iconography of 1990s America, he has had to work overtime as the representative of an entire generation and its favourite decade — the sixties. Liberals loved him, back in '92 and before he betrayed them in so many ways, for dodging the draft and for admitting he'd been around pot-smokers without stalking out in a snit, or summoning the narcs. One popular political button, issued just after his first election, shows a smiling, long-haired, very young Bill over the loving caption, "My President". For the same reasons of course, the right has despised him from the start as Dionysus, god of orgies, incarnate.


The picture of the Clintons dancing in the middle of the day on their Christmas holiday fooled no one PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL J RICHARDS

AT THE Republican National Convention in 1992, Marilyn Quayle, wife of then-vice president Dan Quayle, fired one of the opening salvoes in the culture war when she excoriated demonstrators, drug-takers, draft-dodgers, and, for good measure, working mothers. Nor was her rhetoric particularly inflammatory for the right. When, for example, rocker Jerry Garcia died in 1995 (a passing that the White House noted with appropriate sorrow), the Moonie-owned Washington Times seized the occasion to denounce the sixties as a "toxic decade", marked by "nihilism" and "infantile hedonism".

From the start, Clinton bungled his role as sixties icon. Asked about the draft-dodging, he mumbled and waffled, thereby blowing the priceless opportunity to say, "Yes, and I not only dodged the draft, I also protested proudly against that hideous imperialist war, as so many other citizens of conscience did, blah blah."

On the pot question, he reached a nadir of ambivalence — admitting simultaneously that he'd smoked it, that he hadn't inhaled it, and that he wished he'd ingested a toque or two after all. Why not say, "Yeah, I tried it. Didn't we all? And what's the fuss? One of the wonderful legacies of the sixties counterculture is that we now understand that marijuana is a harmless high, with none of the nasty side-effects of booze"? Or words to that effect.

Better yet, he could have challenged the rightwing culture-warriors' sixties-bashing head on. That poor demonised decade was hardly the 10-year-long sex-and-drugs orgy of prurient rightwing imaginings. It was, for those of you too young to have been there, the last time when great masses of Americans took their polity seriously enough to try to participate in it — by organising, protesting, and generally doing the kind of things that wide-awake citizens normally do. (Not that there's anything wrong with a little partying too.)

More germane to his present difficulties is that he could, years ago, have scored a few pre-emptive points on the subject of sex and its role in public affairs. An adulterous politician may owe an apology to his wife, but unless the adulterous activities were carried on during cabinet meetings or with the heads of foreign states, he does not owe one to his constituents. When Gennifer Flowers revealed her affair with then-candidate Clinton, he and Hillary went on television to offer some sappy twitterings about the vicissitudes of love and marriage. Better to have stated firmly right then: "Sorry folks, but this is none of your business. Even while leaving a thick trail of semen all over the state of Arkansas, I got my job done."

Not only did he fail to challenge the puritanism of the religious right, he gradually acceded to it, even wrapping himself, increasingly, in its tawdry banner. The worst case, because it potentially damages so many lives outside of Clinton's immediate family, is welfare "reform". To the right, welfare reform was not so much a budget-cutting measure as a moral crusade waged against those mythically promiscuous ghetto women who reproduce solely to gain a few additional dollars in welfare payments.

This is not the place to rebut that curiously sex-soaked stereotype, or to go in to the actual statistics on the reproductive habits of the poor. Clinton could have done that at any time, armed with extensive data from his own Health and Human Services department. Instead, his administration joined the campaign against "illegitimate" — or, as we used to say before the right altered the relevant vocabulary, out-of-wedlock — births, having his health and human services director declare them "just wrong".

NO ONE, of course, could have expected a sitting president to endorse non-marital sex; the mistake lay in not asserting, firmly and calmly, that sex happens, that it happens even among people who are not married to each other, and that the products of such unions are fully legitimate human beings, deserving of social supports. Instead, to his eternal dishonour, in 1996 Clinton signed a welfare reform bill that ends the federal responsibility to children in poverty and, as the added insult, provides funds to enroll their mothers in what the right styles as "chastity training".

Now a president who snatches alms from poor moms, while consigning their libidos to cold showers and prayer meetings, arguably deserves whatever torments the puritan right can devise as punishment for his own sexual wanderings. My own preference would be to see him impeached for some weightier misdeed than bedding down a White House intern and urging her to lie about it, and his record provides a surfeit of these.

On issue after issue, Clinton would articulate a principle — such as human rights for gays in the military — only to fold at the first snarl of opposition from the right. He promised an "activist government", then gave us a government that is more concerned with what our children wear to school (uniforms or mufti) than with whether they have a meal in their stomachs when they leave the house in the morning. He raised taxes for the rich, then whipped around and apologised to them for doing so.

The list could be extended indefinitely, but the point is this: with the exception of abortion rights, there is nothing Clinton has consistently stood up for, least of all the old sixties notion that sex outside marriage is not innately and in all cases a sin.

By dodging the draft, Clinton may have saved his life. But by slinking away from the culture war, he left the way clear for the political faction that believes sex is evil while usury, exploitation and pollution are just sound management principles. If the rightwing puritans have him cornered now — well, no one can say he ever exerted himself, in the slightest way, to prevent this sordid outcome. And Hillary? One can only hope that those photos purporting to document marital love were, in fact, carefully posed.

Letter from Namibia Margaret Bradley

Boxing clever

WHEN Nina and Frederick sang about "little boxes just the same" it sent a frisson of fear or despair though many of us. We lived in one little box, paid a mortgage for it all our lives, and finished up in another box when we died. Little boxes meant endless years of dull work, of drab social conformity, penny-pinching, nosy neighbours, a circumscribed life . . . but little boxes mean something else in Namibia today.

New Lego-style buildings made up of hundreds of little, grey boxes have sprung up next to every post office — but the citizens are far from being appalled. They are so delighted that they have turned out in droves to get one. Why? Because the keys to these little boxes don't lock us away from each other: they open the doors to communication.

Communications are and have always been on people's minds in Namibia. The population, at only 1.5 million, is small, but the country is vast, and the terrain is demanding.

Along half of the 1,600km of coastal desert the highest dunes in the world roll into the South Atlantic Ocean; over the rest an arid gravel plain stretches to the horizon. The Portuguese, who arrived by sea at the end of the 15th century, took one look at what seemed to them like hell on earth, and left for more fertile lands.

The next group of visitors — mostly traders and missionaries — waited more than 300 years before forging their way into the scrub savannah heartlands via the Cape. They carried their goods in wagons drawn by 20 oxen under a scorching sun. Once across the Orange river, their constant preoccupation must have been water, since the next perennial river was 1,600km away.

Emma Sarah Hahn, the wife of a German missionary, wrote in the 1840s of her yearning for news from her family. Relations had often been born, married or buried for a year before a letter arrived. Priests, travellers or traders passing through carried letters on journeys taking months as they stopped to preach or do business on the way.

The coming of German settlers in late 19th century saw a formalisation of the postal system. Early photographs showed indigenous people in their traditional dress made of cow hides topped by a German postman's hat. With a canvas bag over their shoulders, they ran the eight-day journey between Windhoek and the coast with one change of relay at Otjimbingwe.

Even though the settlers suffered from delay, they did eventually learn the news. The conquered peoples were not so lucky. While the women and children, the old and the sick were confined to "homelands" — some of which they had never before occupied and most of which were incapable of supporting the populations assigned to them — the imposition of taxes forced the men to take up contracts as miners, labourers and agricultural workers hundreds of kilometres from home. Unable to read or write and with no communication systems in place for them, their ignorance of family affairs was total, their loneliness and misery complete.

Eventually roads and railways were constructed. The first was a wagon road from the interior to Walvis Bay, built by a great indigenous leader, Jan Jonker. With no technology of any kind he cleared the route of the tumbled boulders that dot the scrub savannah. If he had realised what misfortunes facilitating travel for white adventurers would bring his people, he might have had second thoughts.

Later, metalled roads and regularly graded gravel pistes made life easier — if you were white. Passes had been introduced to control the movements of indigenous people. Asphalt was laid not so much to bring people together as to keep them down, as troops and armoured personnel carriers pounded northward to the war zóne, where Swapo was fighting for independence.

Telephones came too. In the southern and central areas where the settlers lived, the system was constantly updated. Elsewhere it remained an overloaded manual system which broke down when it rained.

So how do the little grey boxes aid communications? In a country where it is not possible to have a postman going from door, the boxes help to keep isolated and separated people in touch. Post office boxes where people can collect their mail take the place of letter boxes in the doors.

Now more people are literate than ever before. "Little boxes just the same" mean hope, excitement and expanding horizons, not gloom and depression, in Namibia.

A Country Diary

Phil Gates

DURHAM UNIVERSITY, *botanic garden:* A warm breeze swept up last year's leaves and carried them skywards in a whirling wind devil, to the top of the cypresses on the conifer lawn. The mild start to the year has brought spring to the garden, two months early. Snowdrops are in flower, honeybees have been seen in the hellebore flowers and frogs have come out of hibernation. The *rhododendron dauricum* in the peat garden, which almost always pays a penalty in frost-scorched flowers for its precocious blooming, is covered in a mass of immaculate deep pink flowers carried on bare twigs. Swelling willow catkins are beginning to force their way out from under their bud scales, mahonia blossom scents the air in one sheltered part of the garden and witch hazels are on the verge of flowering too.

There is always an uneasiness that goes with a false spring — born of a near-certainty that we will pay for it in due course — but for now the gardeners have taken advantage of a break in the wet weather to prepare a site for a new planting of a collection of ornamental cherry species.

They've chosen a spot sheltered from the winds by birches and tall beeches, where the cherries will be planted around a small depression, so that their petals will fall straight to earth and sit in a pink pool under the trunks in spring.



Water falls 35m into the River Dee from the from the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct after the plug was removed at the start of a restoration programme. The Grade I listed aqueduct, the biggest and highest in Britain, was built by Thomas Telford as part of a plan to link Liverpool to Bristol PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

HOW fast would I have to travel to avoid being captured by a speed camera?

AS FAST as the law allows. — *Myles Lawless, Cheltenham, Gloucester*

SPEED cameras, or radar guns, work on the Doppler principle, that the electromagnetic wave/particles (photons) reflected from the moving vehicle have a lower or higher frequency, depending on direction and velocity relative to the observing radar gun.

If the questioner travelled at the velocity of light, the photons would be unable to catch up with him, and thus could not be reflected back to the receiver, and no speed would be recorded. But to achieve this velocity would require infinite energy expenditure, and is therefore impossible for material objects.

If his velocity of approach to the camera were near to that of light, the frequency of each reflected photon would be so high that its own energy, by Planck's Law, would be sufficient to destroy the camera, and hence the evidence. — *Richard Harvey, Salisbury, Wiltshire*

IN THIS modern age of miracle synthetic materials, why can't someone come up with a windscreen-wiper blade that does not screech when the screen is dry?

WINDSCREEN wipers are in fact designed to squeak when the screen is dry, in order to remind us that it is bad for both the wipers and the glass to operate them in this condition. The friction between the wiper and the dry glass, aggravated by road dust and dirt, wears both away. — *Walter Ogston, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA*

WHAT were the social effects in the 19th century of opium in China and hashish in Egypt? How were these mass addictions stopped — or weren't they?

THE social effects of opium smoking among all sections of the Chinese population were deleterious, so much so that the growing of the opium poppy, the production, distribution and smoking of opium was prohibited by imperial decree. The imperial government largely succeeded in preventing the production and distribution of Chinese opium but it was not able to stop people smoking it.

The Chinese demand for opium was supplied by British traders from India. By the 1830s more than 25,000 chests (each containing 60-70 kilograms) were smuggled into China each year. In 1839 the Chinese court sent Lin Xexu as special commissioner to Canton, the centre of the opium trade, to enforce prohibition. He ordered the surrender of all opium stocks and imprisoned the British merchants in their factories. Lin's actions precipitated the first Anglo-Chinese war, or first opium war. — *John Davies, Department of History, Liverpool Hope University*

IS IT better to be intelligent or well-educated?

THE Labour MP Dennis Skinner once remarked of a fellow (public-school educated) MP: "The honourable gentleman is obviously educated beyond his intellect." — *Pete Campbell, Bath*

GENERAL scientific consensus defines intelligence as primarily the ability to adapt to new situations and the capacity for problem-solving using certain choices over others in order to make profitable decisions.

Education is useful, but as the psychologist/educator Edward de Bono wrote, it "is no substitute for information". Our knowledge of the world is incomplete — every day we learn new experiences and absorb better methods to arrive at solutions. De Bono recently wrote: "Unless we have complete information, we need thinking in order to make the best use of the information we have." That is why all the education in the world is not necessarily intelligence-transforming.

Intelligence (as a survival technique) preceded the emergence of higher pursuits in the sciences and arts. In the modern world, intelligence can be interpreted as the ability to be successful, involving social/economic adaptability, effective decision-making and being pro-active. It is beneficial to have an education, but it seems to be an adjunct to the role intelligence plays. — *Suzanne Elgohari, London*

A POOR education is something that can always be remedied. If you are stupid, you are stupid for life. — *Lynne Batik, Aberdeen*

CAN the Queen cook?

MONARCHY may be obsolescent, but it's unfair to exaggerate royalty's personal unhandiness. The German Imperial family had a tradition of apprenticing its princes to trades; Queen Victoria's children earned pocket money by working for the head gardener; and it was reliably reported that at her beach hut the present Queen always cooked the lunch and got family and guests to help her with the washing up. — *Mike Lyle, Llangynog, Carmarthen*

Any answers?

LUNAR Prospector is the first civilian moon mission for 25 years. How many military missions have there been, and what have they been doing? — ***Peter Taylor-Gooby, Canterbury, Kent***

WHY can't we all just love each other? — ***Cath Bennett, Hong Kong***

I HAVE a number of prints depicting London street traders, published in 1815. Among them is a vendor of "Birmingham Balls". Her basket is closed, so I have no idea what these might be. Does anyone know? — ***Robin Davidson, London***

WHY is the Star of David sometimes found on the gates to Hindu temples? — ***Emily Napier, London***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/

Leaks that turned into a flood of complaints

A baby suffering chronic digestive disorder and extreme distress is suing the makers of her mother's breast implant. Banned in the US, silicone implants are still used in Britain despite widespread concern. **Sarah Boseley** reports

THE British pin-up Melinda Messenger is just one of the many glamour models who have had boob jobs. We all know that some of the most expensive cleavages in show business have been pumped up beyond their natural cup size with a breast implant. We all snigger at the surgeon's art. What's the harm?

The thought that new-born babies might suckle silicone through their mother's nipple comes like a bucket of cold water on all the fun. The debate over the safety of silicone gel implants has taken a new turn in Britain with the granting of legal aid to Danni (Daniella) Bowler, now 21 months old, to sue an unidentified foreign company. And there are at least 50 more children like her.

Danni's mother, Mary Bowler, aged 26, had a silicone gel implant in January 1993 because one of her breasts had never developed. Hers was one of the 40 per cent of implants carried out for medical reasons, not vanity. By the time she had her operation, silicone gel-filled implants had been banned by the United States Food and Drugs Administration for nearly a year. They are legal in Britain despite two reviews of the medical evidence — another is now underway.

The FDA acted because of the large number of women with implants complaining that they had become ill and because the manufacturers, Dow Corning, had not proved the implants were safe. In the US, the onus is on the makers to provide positive proof.

Bowler knew none of this. "They didn't tell me of the risks," she says. "I felt good after the operation because I had a proper chest, but then it started to go wrong." The implant leaked inside her. When she eventually had it removed, it was full of air bubbles.

She had her first child, Jordan, now three, without any problems. "I didn't breast-feed my son. He went straight on the bottle." Then just over a year later, she fell pregnant again. "When I was seven months pregnant, I felt terribly ill. I was breathless, anaemic and couldn't do much. I had chest X-rays and an ECG and liver tests."

When Danni was born, Bowler put her to the breast, having been told by the doctors it was the best thing for the baby's health. By then, she was worried about her implant. "I asked on the delivery floor if it would be all right and they said it was safe. But I felt this very sharp pain and the implant pulling."

The problem was with the silicone-filled breast, not the other. It made feeding agony and, after three days, she put Danni on the bottle.

Something was wrong with the baby. "She was ill from the start. She was a tiny baby and just got worse. She couldn't tolerate any milk, even soya milk." Danni had to be fed on a special non-dairy, non-soya substitute, which doctors prescribed for her. Danni has had permanent digestive problems, diarrhoea and a lot of distress. "She seemed to be afraid of something," says her mother. "Her eyes would stare wide open all the time." All the pictures of Danni as a baby are like that. She wouldn't sleep after feeding. She would scream with stomach aches and have horrible diarrhoea. First, they said she had colic, and then digestive problems. She has a paediatrician who has given her blood tests and things like that. Nothing really has come up." Bowler believes the doctors are not looking in the right direction.

Through anti-silicone campaigners in Britain, she was put in touch with an American organisation called Children Affected by Toxic Substances (CATS). "They said she has all the signs of second-generation silicone poisoning," she says.

That is the claim which may now be tested in the courts. Women like Sylvia Ball from St Helens, near Liverpool, will be watching. She has four boys, two born before and two after she had a silicone-gel implant to reconstruct her collapsed breasts. She fed her second son successfully, she says, and enjoyed it, having bottle-fed the first. With the third and fourth, things were different. "They screamed. They hated the taste. I think they sensed it was poison. I'm convinced silicone was coming out. I had to stop breast-feeding. They were starving."

Ball's elder breast-fed boy has "come out great", she says, and is now at university in Wales. Nicholas, aged 12, and Alex, 10, cause her a lot more concern. "Nicholas is presently being investigated about a growth inside his cheek which he has had for the last 12 weeks," she says. "He's getting terrible headaches and chronic tiredness. He used to be very sporty until he got tired, and he's put lots of weight on.

"The other one, Alex, can't put weight on, although he eats a lot, and I don't like the look of the dark circles he's had since birth."

Ball herself was first diagnosed as having ME. A second doctor has called it siliconosis. "It was due to leakage of the implants," says Ball. Her symptoms have been chronic exhaustion, unbearable pains in her bones and joints, flu-like symptoms and pains in the chest and eyes.

There are thousands of women with these symptoms and a variety of others who are convinced they and, in some cases, their children have been poisoned by silicone leaks from an implant inside their body. Former Fleetwood Mac singer Stevie Nicks recently declared that her health had been destroyed by her silicone implants. If all this damage is being done, it should be a scandal of huge proportions. But the implants are still legally used in Britain on some 5,000 to 6,000 women a year. What is going on?

British campaign groups claim cover-up. Makers' claims that silicone is inert, and therefore safe, have been upheld by two scientific reviews and the Medical Devices Agency (MDA), which licenses the implants for use. Doctors and scientists disagree with each other.

Compensation battles raging in the US muddy the waters even more. After the FDA's ban on silicone-filled implants in April 1992, the trickle of claims against manufacturers became a flood. Dow Corning, the largest manufacturer, claimed 20,000 lawsuits were filed against it within two years.

In the early days, one woman walked away with more than $1 million in spite of the absence of evidence to prove that she had been damaged by her silicone implant or that she had even been ill. With hindsight, it may have been a wrong move. The avalanche of claims made Dow Corning flee to the bankruptcy courts. It has since filed various proposals for a fund worth some $2.4 billion to settle 200,000 claims throughout the world.

Meanwhile its parent company, the very wealthy Dow Chemical, has been battling fiercely against the claims of victims' lawyers that it is financially liable for any damage, insisting that it never designed, manufactured or sold implants, although it did test the material. It had successfully kept its distance until recently, but last August it received a substantial, although not knock-out, blow during a class action of 1,800 women in Louisiana. The jury found that Dow Chemical had inadequately tested the material and covered up problems. It gave the go-ahead to a trial of whether women had suffered harm from their implants, although the judge has dismissed any continuation of a class action. The cases of eight individual women will be heard instead.

The documents from Dow Corning that have surfaced during this trial have destroyed any seed of doubt lingering in the minds of the women who believe themselves to have been poisoned by silicone. They have had a spectacular circulation, plastered all over the Internet by support groups.

Mary Bowler and her daughter Danni, whose case will be fought with legal aid PHOTOGRAPH: BRYN COLTON

'Danni seemed to be afraid. Her eyes would stare wide open all the time. She would scream with stomach aches and have horrible diarrhoea'

Sylvia Ball is now trying desperately to raise £2,600 ($4,200) to have her implants removed privately. On the National Health Service, she says, they do not take away the scar tissue which contains a lot of silicone from a ruptured implant.

Memos were produced in court stating that "we have no valid long-term implant data to substantiate the safety of gels for long-term implant use" (September 1983), regretting that the silicone gel envelopes were only "just good enough" (January 1976), urging medical salesmen to wash and dry the implant before demonstrating it to customers, to get rid of any silicone that might have bled out of it (May 1975) and agreeing to dispatch faulty shipments "to any country other than US, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand". It goes on: "They are excellent for South America, Near East, Eastern Europe, Africa and Far East" (October 1976).

Despite the confusion, the experts agree that more than half the implants do rupture, sometimes within only a few years of an operation. The silicone gel leaks out and migrates to all parts of the body. Some women find they have lumps of gel in an arm or leg.

It is not pleasant, but many scientists say it cannot be harmful because silicone is inert. Back in the forties, Japanese prostitutes were injected with industrial grade liquid silicone to develop the large breasts Americans were thought to lust after. Some died and some irretrievably damaged their health. But the medical grade silicone contained in an implant envelope has been cleared time and again of causing cancers or connective tissue diseases.

Most women complain not of such disease but of auto-immune-like disorders. The FDA lists the most common as: joint pain and swelling; skin tightness, redness or swelling; swelling of hands and feet; rash; swollen glands or lymph nodes; unusual fatigue; general aching; greater chance of getting colds, viruses and flu; unusual hair loss; memory problems; headaches; muscle weakness or burning; nausea or vomiting; and irritable bowel syndrome.

New evidence from the US suggests that all could be explained if some women react to silicone where others do not. Dr Robert Garry, of Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, believes that some women have antibodies to man-made polymers in their blood. That has led to the review now taking place, led by Professor Roger Sturrock, an eminent rheumatologist from Glasgow university. Dr Garry is adamant — silicone gel implants should be banned in Britain.

The two main campaigns here, Silicone Support UK, run by Margo Cameron, and the Survivors of Silicone, led by Elaine Coomber, are glad and hopeful, but say that even if the review results in a ban, their work is far from over. Elaine Coomber, who says she is so ill herself that she cannot get out of bed some days, has been campaigning for three years.

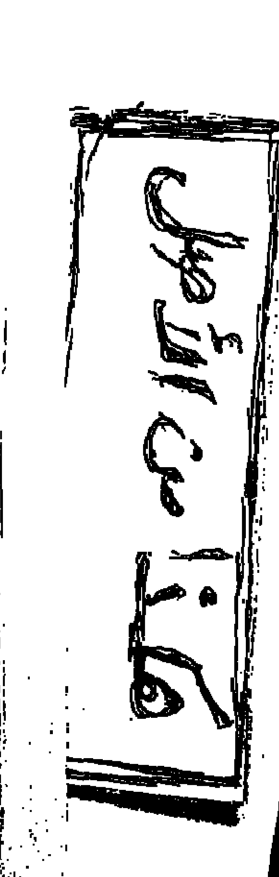
A deadline was set last February for registering for a chance of compensation from Dow, but Coomber says many sufferers still do not realise why they have been ill.

Coomber has hundreds of sad stories from the 4,000 women she believes have registered for possible compensation, including her own. She is 52 and had her implants when she was 29. Most years since, she has been ill. She cared about her appearance. "I had breast implants to enhance myself and now I'm in such a state that to paint my nails or have my hair done is really difficult and sometimes impossible."

Margo Cameron, based in Glasgow, who was poisoned, she believes, by the liquid silicone injections she was given in her lip in 1990, has been made militant by what she sees as the sinister cover-up by the silicone industry and others. "Nobody could tell me why I was ill," she says. She discovered the cause in the US. "When I came back, I was told I was the only person in Britain suffering this way," she says. As her American doctor had forewarned her, she went down with MS three years later. She later discovered that liquid silicone had never been authorised for injecting.

These women are all hoping that Danni Bowler, little as she is, can change perceptions in Britain. Categoric medical proof of the case against silicone gel does not yet exist, but can so many thousands of women all be wrong?

Helplines in Britain: Survivors of Silicone, tel: 01322 667044; Silicone Support Group UK, tel: 0141 6378450



One for the gentlemen

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE Truth About Women (ITV) is one of September Films' bumper fun tubs of popcorn. They do several flavours. It is based on the premise that anyone can be entertaining for five seconds. Quick quotes are cut together as though the speakers were in the same room.

The general effect is as light and bright as a line of socks blowing on a washing line, with the occasional pair of invigoratingly bright bloomers.

The socks were all presenters. I didn't know there were so many presenters in the world. Some I was meeting for the first and last time. Carol McGiffin (presenter). Zoë Ball (presenter). Carol Smillie and Denise Van Outen (presenters). Emma Forbes, Penny Smith, Mariella Frostrup, Sara Cox and Davina McCall (all presenters).

Daddy, daddy, what's a presenter? A presenter, child, is presentable. She is a blonde so blonde that she glows in the dark with radioactive phosphorescence, like some strange invertebrate in the Mindanao Trench. If a presenter is pigheaded enough to be a brunette, she may be too bright for the job.

The bloomers were up-front-and-at-'em women, always good for an entertaining quote. Jenny Eclair gazed stage right with deceptive mistiness and said, "A proper, real old-fashioned man, that's what I like. A man in a trilby. A man who can rescue a calf from a swollen river." If she's ever been nearer a cow than McDonald's, I'll eat a hamburger — but what a clever girl. He *had* to wear a trilby and he *had* to save a calf. A cap and a lamb would not have been funny. I don't know why. Trust me, I'm an audience.

Maureen Lipman had a vivid little mime of girls from Hull on the pull, and a vivider opinion of Tenerife: "The most awful place on earth. A black island with green bananas."

Christine Hamilton, game girl: "Aargh! At the risk of confirming the stereotype image I have in some people's minds, I asked Neil to marry me — or rather I told him we were getting married."

Jilly Goolden: "Find a man with a narrow head because it's easier in childbirth."

Vanessa Feltz: "As my mother was expelling the placenta, she was dreaming about what she would wear at the wedding." (This may lead some to suppose Vanessa burst into the world before her mother had nailed her father's foot to the floor. No, no, *Vanessa's* wedding.)

Sharon Osbourne, Ozzy's wife and manager: "I love old Mrs Bobbitt." A turn of phrase that somehow reinvented the little chopper-chopper from Ecuador as an old dear from Camberwick Green.

This programme, the first of four, was on love and sex. "Sex and love is like bacon and eggs. You can have bacon and eggs, or you can have a bacon sandwich, or you can have an omelette," said Zak Keir, who seems to have done a good deal of research on the subject.

My favourites were Zandra Rhodes, languidly reclined on random rich rags and swags, and Terrie Bishop, festooned with children. Her youngest is called Babydoll because her husband is called Dol. Dol lives three kilometres away, and that suits Terrie fine.

"I've got a built-in baby-si'er and I 'aven't got 'im be'ind me all the time at me bum," she said. "They get under your armpits, don' they?" They do.

The bouncy bluesman

OBITUARY
Junior Wells

JUNIOR WELLS, **the blues singer and harmonica player who has died from lymphoma aged 63, once protested, "I just don't understand how you can play good music and stand still. That was a problem I had the first time I went to Europe. I got booed in Germany, because I was moving around and playing. They wanted to see me like Sleepy Jones Estes, where you get a chair and sit down and play. I can't play that way!"**

I remember Wells on stage in London at the 1966 American Folk Blues Festival, a small coiled spring in black silk zinging round the stage like a Chinese kick-boxer. A young woman next to me, subdued by the sober, introverted blues of earlier performers on the bill and plainly wondering if the whole evening would be that hard going, visibly cheered up at Wells's sudden input of hot-pepper sexuality.

For about two decades Wells and Buddy Guy were the finest and most famous partnership in modern blues. They had met, as so many Chicago bluesmen did, in the orbit of Muddy Waters. Wells had grown up in West Memphis. "My father . . . all he knew about was sharecropping," he told the writer Paul Trynka. "He was in a plantation in . . . I can't recall the name, and I don't never want to recall it no more anyway."

Rather than have to do farmwork he was sent to his mother in Chicago, where as a boy he hung around older bluesmen such as Tampa Red. By his mid-teens he was playing regularly with the guitarists Dave and Louis Myers as The Three Deuces (later Aces).



Wells: a small, coiled spring in black silk zinging round the stage

At 18 he grabbed the city's premier harmonica job, replacing Little Walter in the Muddy Waters band. Less than two years later, however, he passed the gig on to James Cotton so that, like Little Walter before him, he could promote his own career, which had recently been accelerated by his startling first recordings such as Hoodoo Man.

Wells was already revealing a distinctive harmonica tone, and on subsequent records such as Come On In This House and Messin' With the Kid he sounded both bluesy and teenagerish.

There might have been a valuable skill, had he had backing, but in common with all the Chicago bluesmen he had a lean time in the early-to-mid-1960s, scuffling for low-paid club work and infrequent recording dates. Things improved as blues was embraced by the beautiful people: Wells and Guy, who began working together regularly after collaborating on Wells's 1965 album Hoodoo Man Blues, were booked at hippie and campus venues, toured as support act for the Rolling Stones and recorded several albums each for the folk label Vanguard.

By the 1970s they were blues glitterati, featured in films and feted in Europe, Australia and Japan. In their interplay on stage they were at times as artful as Astaire and Rogers, though on undisciplined evenings they could come across more like Laurel and Hardy.

After several quiet years Wells started recording in the early 1990s, and in 1996 produced the virtually acoustic Come On In This House. Seasoned admirers, preparing to greet it as his best album for more than 20 years, suddenly realised that apart from his collaborations with Guy he had let almost 20 years go by without recording very much at all.

In part that was because he had deliberately put public performance before records, but it also hints at his one artistic shortcoming. Though a dramatic harmonica-player and an effective interpreter of other people's songs, he was that curious and uncommon figure, a blues singer who had no story of his own to tell.

Tony Russell

Amos "Junior" Wells, blues musician, born December 9, 1934; died January 15, 1998

No trouble at t'Mill . . . Hockney with his painting of Salts Mill

PHOTOGRAPH: NIGEL HILLIER

Total recall

ART
Alfred Hickling

DAVID HOCKNEY'S interest in landscape generally extends no further than cruising through the Hollywood Hills with Parsifal on the car stereo. A reflective exhibition rooted in his response to his native environment seemed about as probable as Constable switching haywains for swimming pools.

Last summer, however, the artist found himself having to occupy himself during the final stages of a close friend's cancer. Jonathan Silver's magnificent Hockney collection at Salts Mill, Saltaire, had drawn the artist to spend an increasing amount of time in his native Yorkshire, so it is fitting that Silver's final request should have been for Hockney to paint the local landscape, the light and the mill itself.

Hockney has made two important migrations in his career, switching urban Bradford for swinging London before forsaking England altogether and heading for Hollywood. The current exhibition at Salts suggests that in spirit he's never really been away.

The transatlantic imprint in his work is indelible these days, of course. He may have come back from California to re-examine rural Yorkshire, but he has brought the light with him. If you are looking for topographical postcard shots of pleasant vistas, then forget it. Hockney has painted the landscape of his remembrance fused with present experience. The problem with memory is that it produces tricks and distortions — things seem bigger, brighter, more condensed than they actually are. Hockney's Yorkshire is splayed across the canvas with all these distortions intact. As scenic views they are hardly accurate, but as images filtered and redrawn they are all the more truthful for it.

A Hockney landscape (new phenomenon that it is) features distance while flinging away the conventional apparatus of perspective. His Yorkshire is plastered hard in two dimensions against the picture plane, like a small child pressing his nose against a sweet-shop window. The resulting panoramas are as a child might recall them. Everything has equal importance. Everything is irradiated with slightly wild, acidic colours.

Four years ago Salts Mill housed the première of Hockney's Very New Paintings, a sequence of abstract whirls and scrolls painted with vigorous abandon that seemed, en masse, like so much hallucinogenic wallpaper. The paintings were full of scrubby little dots, hatchings and disappearing curves. Look at the collection of Yorkshire landscapes and there they all are again, except the dots are now haystacks in the fields where Hockney used to work during harvest time as a boy. The Very New Paintings were a group of abstracts that could have been landscapes. The Local Paintings are landscapes that are equally abstract.

The one clear exception is the centrepiece of the exhibition: the expansive, double-panelled portrayal of the mill that Titus Salt built and Jonathan Silver resuscitated. Silver asked Hockney to convey the sense of how big the mill is, and he obliged by painting it bigger. Salts glows in the picture — as it does these days in real life — like a golden, sandstone temple to creativity and commerce.

It is only towards the end of the sequence that the energy fizzles out and ennui sets in. The initial canvases were produced from spring to high summer as the light intensified, but were completed in early autumn as the weather chilled and Silver entered his final decline. The final few paintings become physically smaller and spiritually emptier. Suddenly Hockney produces a vista of a rolling wold in true perspective.

The paint layer is thinner, the colour less certain, the greenery on the point of withering. It has the loaded wistfulness of a Claude vista in search of a subject, an anti-landscape in which there is nothing to see.

Alternatively you could simply say that it is a very bad painting. None the less, these six pictures grouped together, distinctly convey the circumstance in which they were produced. They could prove to be the most poignant things Hockney has ever painted.

Local Views By Local Artist For A Local Lad is at Salts Mill, Saltaire, West Yorkshire, till April

Waving, not drowning

CINEMA
Richard Williams

IF YOU'RE going to spend $250 million on a film, your first duty is to put the dollars on the screen. Then you have to give the audience a better reason to make its own investment. Forget that bit and you're sunk.

With Titanic, James Cameron admirably fulfils the first part of his task. From bow to stern, his huge film matches the physical grandeur of its subject. We are thrilled by our first glimpse of the ship, and later comprehensively astonished by the lavish reconstruction of its terrible fate. But at the other end of the scale, in the human dimension, the director's judgment is less easy to endorse.

In my experience of cinema-going, Titanic's ratio of expenditure to expectation has been matched only by the 1959 version of Ben-Hur, which cost $15 million, and Cleopatra, with three times that budget four years later. For all the exhilaration of the famous chariot race and the smouldering glances of Taylor and Burton, both films seemed curiously undernourished, although Ben-Hur won the Oscar for best picture, a fate which Titanic seems likely to emulate.

Cameron, who also wrote the screenplay, shows his shrewd understanding of the dangers in various ways — by taking care to sustain the sense of spectacle throughout the film, by finding a way of establishing a relationship with our own time, and by acknowledging that a film with a passenger list of 2,000 had better find itself a small group of individuals whose story can be used to balance and humanise the vastness that surrounds it.

Cameron begins the tale in the present day, with a group of treasure hunters using hi-tech submarine equipment to examine the hulk that came to rest two-and-a-half miles below the surface of the Atlantic one calm, clear April night in 1912. They're after a legendary diamond, but what they find is a sketch of a young girl, one Rose DeWitt Bukater, wearing nothing but the stone in question. Soon Rose, now 100 years old, arrives by helicopter to join them; through her eyes (she is played in this incarnation by Gloria Stuart) we travel back to the start of the tale.

As the great ship leaves its dock in Southampton, setting off on its maiden voyage, Cameron uses all his technical trickery to present frame after frame composed like wonderful modern paintings. Lit by a pale sun, the clean lines and elegant angles ravish the eye while the contrast of a vast, dark bulk with dolphins, fishing boats and even with the town itself inspires a proper awe.

The young Rose (Kate Winslet) is on board, accompanied by her mother (Frances Fisher), her fiancé, the textile heir Caledon Hockley (Billy Zane), and his English manservant, Spicer Lovejoy (David Warner). "To me it was a slave ship," Rose tells us, "taking one back to America in chains." We are in no doubt that it will be a marriage of convenience, necessitated by her late father's legacy of bad debts.

This makes the presence in her luggage of original canvases by Monet, Degas and Picasso (Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, no less) a bit of a puzzle. A gift from her intended? Hardly. "Somebody Picasso," Hockley snorts when invited to identify the painter of the Demoiselles. "He'll never amount to anything."

Poor Zane, playing his usual blackbrowed bastard, gets the worst of a script that seldom pauses to consider the alternative to a cliché.

Rose glimpses an alternative to this arrogant numbskull in the urchin form of Jack Dawson (Leonardo DiCaprio), who springs to the rescue when she is considering ending it all by jumping off the stern rail. Cameron's casting of DiCaprio is surely the real key to the film's commercial success, and there is no denying that some ingenuity has been put into the creation of his character. A poor but gifted boy from Wisconsin, Dawson is also on his way home. Weary of sketching prostitutes in Montmartre, he won a third-class ticket during a dockside poker game 10 minutes before the gangplank was raised, meaning that there will be no record of his voyage.

DICAPRIO gives Jack a spunky, Huck Finn-ish independence, which is just as well, since the absence of chemistry in his relationship with Winslet would otherwise halt the story before it reached cruising speed. However accomplished the English actress may have shown herself to be in other projects, here she fails through a simple lack of verisimilitude. For a start, an American society girl of 1912 would not descend the ship's grand staircase like a farm girl. And she is — sorry to have to say this, but there's no other way — too fleshy to be convincing either as her mother's daughter or as someone Dawson would fall for. He, on the other hand, is plausible enough to drive Hockley to vile revenge.

This somewhat basic contradiction recedes when, after an hour or so, the ship hits the iceberg. Cameron has cleverly prepared us by getting the treasure-hunters to show the old Rose their own fascinating computer-generated reconstruction of the collision and its effect, thus allowing the director to give us a more impressionistic (although still brilliantly executed) account of the event.

Thereafter the action is unrelenting as the ship's fate becomes apparent and panic grows. Inadequate lifeboats are half-filled with first-class passengers and launched to safety while the mob in steerage are held back by locked gates. Meanwhile Hockley and Dawson continue to fight for the right to rescue the girl, to the plucky serenades of a Palm Court orchestra.

More than 1,500 died when the ship broke in half and sank. With enormous and devastating flair, Cameron shows us death by drowning among those trapped in the lower decks, by impact as fingerholds loosen when the stern rears up on its end, and by hypothermia in the ocean during the two moonlit hours between the disappearance of the hulk and the arrival of the first rescuers. The effect will be reduced for some only by his fashionable and childish insistence on portraying practically all the English characters as snobs, cowards or cretins, and everyone else — with the exception of Hockley and Rose's mother — as pure of soul and spirit.

But Titanic is, in the end, and despite being prohibited to those under 12 years old, a film for children of all ages, for those ready to gasp at a parade of wonders and eager to be swept away. For those, in other words, who won't come out scratching their heads and wondering how those girls from Avignon made it to New York after all, and an eventual home at the Museum of Modern Art.

Flawed figurehead: Winslett fails through a lack of verisimilitude

A cutting wit amid the melodrama

OPERA
Andrew Clements

STEPHEN SONDHEIM **came to Sweeney Todd via a 1950s play, but its origins go back to Victorian melodrama, and that is precisely the world director David McVicar and designer Michael Vale conjure up so expertly for Opera North's new touring production.**

Opera North is the first opera company in Britain to take on on what is one of Sondheim's finest and most emotionally ambiguous scores. In telling the story of the demon barber of Fleet Street who cuts his customers' throats rather than their hair and so provides Mrs Lovett's pie shop with a constant supply of raw materials, it juxtaposes wit and humour with gruesome realism.

Vale provides a thoughtful and dramatically effective set — a giant wheel to suggest the industrialisation that was sharpening the class war in 19th century London and a one-up, two-down shop front for Sweeney's salon and Mrs Lovett's bakehouse.

McVicar maintains the brooding menace with a production that insinuates mysterious presences and mute observers even into the domestic scenes, yet never fails to produce the laughs from Sondheim's constantly adroit wordplay. The balance between humour and horrific seriousness that lies at the heart of Sondheim's score is beautifully caught in the macabre domesticity of the central couple — Todd projected by Steven Page with a compelling mixture of vengeful mania and moral fervour, Mrs Lovett brought to life by Beverly Klein as a predatory monster who recognises the barber's vulnerability from the start.

The chorus, setting the scene with the Ballad of Sweeney Todd, play a crucial role, even though their words are too often blurred, and they provide a gallery of working-class life that sets all the protagonists in sharp relief.

Only Karl Daymond disappoints: he seems uneasily miscast as Anthony, and sounds tentative in his scenes with Johanna (Lucy Schaufer), which produce Sondheim's most rapturous vocal writing. But there are fine performances from Christopher Saunders as the forlorn Tobias, Adrian Thompson as the rival barber Pirelli, Malcolm Rivers as the sado-masochistic Judge Turpin, and Gillian Kirkpatrick as the Beggar Woman who becomes one of Todd's final victims and is revealed as the wife he thought already dead.

The show is a perfect example of Opera North's strengths, and crucial to this success is the conducting of James Holmes, who is careful to set tempi that allow a great deal of the artfully clever text to get across and realises all the colours of the full-orchestra version of the score. Holmes sustains even the long first act without a hint of sagging. It's a hugely rewarding evening: queasy and uneasy certainly, but powerful and touching too.

Dreams of England

THEATRE
Michael Billington

LOSING my way some years ago in a picturesque Venetian backwater, I asked a friendly local for help. "You from London?" he inquired. When I told him that I was, his eyes lit up and he uttered, with pure rhapsodic joy, a cry of "Ah, the magic of Golders Green!"

That memory came back to me as I was watching Phyllis Nagy's Never Land, jointly presented by The Foundry and the Royal Court in London; for one of Nagy's many themes in this rich, dense, if somewhat overwritten, play is that we constantly fantasise about other countries. Indeed her hero, Henri Joubert, living with his wife and daughter in the south of France, not only dreams of becoming a Bristol bookseller and imagines that the wine he drinks with his perfume factory boss is tea, but forces his family and guests to act out classic scenes from Fawlty Towers.

In part, Nagy is dealing with the sustaining nature of myths. Henri, a nervous, panic-stricken figure who sees menace all around him, displaces his daily fears by creating a romantic vision of England. And nothing in the play is crueller — or more plausible — than the scene in which the wife of the bookshop-owner who has offered Henri a job shatters his dream with a gushing, toothy innocence.

But Nagy is clearly writing about much more than cross-Channel misunderstanding. At one point Henri and his perfumery boss argue about destiny and will, and Nagy clearly implies that her hero is the victim of cruel, strangulating fate.

I also see the play as a testament to the power of buried, unspoken love, in that, although Henri and his bitter, boozy wife are at constant loggerheads, they are in fact united by a strange, subterranean passion.

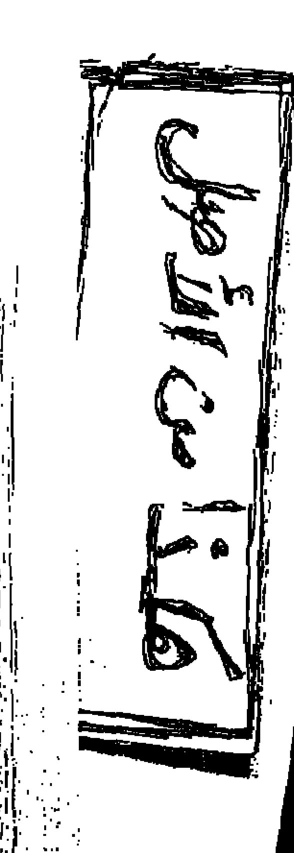
Nagy certainly doesn't lack for ideas: the problem is that, in pursuing all of them and in giving virtually every character his or her own interior monologue, she sometimes allows her three-act, three-hour play to meander.

But I can forgive her play its discursiveness for its imaginative oddity and its feeling for character: in particular, the crazily anglophile Henri is a rich creation who is absurd, tragic, politically repellent and yet strangely believable.

In short, Nagy creates a genuine world on stage: one that is well realised in Steven Pimlott's production and Mark Thompson's design, in which the rain beats down incessantly in this supposedly idyllic pocket of southern France.

The performances also, are in tune with the writing. Pip Donaghy conveys both the inner torment and dreaming ineffectualness of the helpless Henri. Sheila Gish as his alcoholic wife offers a fascinating picture of slightly decaying voluptuousness. And Suzanne Burden as the bookseller's wife has a fake, upper-class, smiling gushiness that is as instantly recognisable as the wine-bibbing, sensual contentment of David Killick as Henri's French boss.

Never Land may not be a flawless play, but it is a quietly engrossing one.



Sylvia Plath . . . Hughes has broken a 35-year silence with 88 poems full of tenderness and anger

A tragic love, powerfully recalled

Sarah Maguire

Birthday Letters
by Ted Hughes
Faber & Faber 198pp £14.99

GRIEF takes time. Thirty-five years after the death of Sylvia Plath, her husband Ted Hughes has created the most stunning literary sensation I can remember with the publication of Birthday Letters, a sequence of 88 chronologically arranged poems provoked by their passionate, tempestuous marriage and by the aftershocks of Plath's suicide. These are poems of astonishing tragic power, a force intensified by their sudden appearance. Birthday Letters is a shock. Which is highly appropriate, given how full of shocks the book is.

Some of those shocks are both literal and metaphorical at once, perhaps most poignantly in the sixth poem in the book, "Tender Places": "Your temples, where the hair crowded in,/Were the tender places", the poem begins, as might any love poem. Then the shock: "Once to check/I dropped a file across the electrodes of a twelve-volt battery — it exploded/Like a grenade."

This juxtaposition jolts us into a fierce (and tender) poem about the terrible ordeals of electro-convulsive therapy Plath endured after her failed suicide attempt. What is so moving is the passionate empathy Hughes reveals with his wife's scars and sufferings. He loved her and he felt for her, and the intensity of that love will no doubt come as a surprise to many who have taken Hughes's awkward silence for a hardened heart.

As "Tender Places" indicates, the first difficulty presented by Birthday Letters is how to read it. As a collection of poems? As a biographical document? To pretend that it's possible to read the sequence as pure poetry (whatever that may be) excised from its troubled context, is delusional — and unfair to Hughes's achievement. On the other hand, it would be equally damaging if Birthday Letters were to suffer the same fate as that frequently imposed on Sylvia Plath's work, which so often has been milked as if it were circumstantial evidence in a murder trial.

Given the bitter battles fought over Plath's poems for what they "really" mean, what's so intriguing about Birthday Letters is the way in which the poems specifically foreground questions of interpretation, and repeatedly suggest how fluid it can be. For example, in "Your Paris" Hughes admits he "decoded" Plath's "gushy burblings", "Into a language utterly new to me/With conjectural, hopelessly wrong meanings". The issue of interpretation, the tension produced by the poets' discordant points of view, was to destroy their marriage, Birthday Letters implies.

This becomes vividly apparent in "The Rabbit Catcher", itself a response to Plath's own poem of the same title. (Much of Birthday Letters enters a dialogue with Plath's work, as was the case when both poets were alive.) Where Hughes here scorns his wife for seeing "baby-eyed/Strangled innocents", versus his "sacred/Ancient customs", in Plath's poem the rabbit catcher is more troubling than a murderer of sentiment: "How they awaited him, those little deaths!/ They waited like sweethearts. They excited him", she writes, characteristically investing her imagery with the language of sexuality and power.

No doubt such moments of conflict will be gathered eagerly in some quarters as ammunition against Hughes — and in others as dirt to throw at Plath. Other weapons could be plucked from the repeated assertion, with hindsight, that Plath's "real target/Hid behind me, Your Daddy" (from "The Shot"), which arguably colludes with the blame-culture's assertion that Plath was mad long before she set eyes on Hughes. But to reduce Birthday Letters (or Plath's work) to an argument is to miss the richness and complexity of these poems.

As the husband of his late wife, Hughes should know better than most about the openness of poems. Had he wanted to mount a case in his defence, Hughes could not have chosen a more treacherous medium. In the end, what is so shocking — and so moving — about Birthday Letters is the depth and range of its emotional openness. These are poems full of tenderness and anger, warmth and despair.

Hughes has often been caricatured as a dour poet, doggedly facing up to the cosmic indifference of nature to humanity. Anyone with this impression of Hughes will be staggered by the fresh emotion welling through Birthday Letters — as will even those readers familiar with a more nuanced version of his *oeuvre*. Ted Hughes simply has not published such open-hearted, heartbreaking poems before.

There are moments of unevenness. Some of the later poems (which I suspect were written earlier) are muddier in their intentions and execution. Some poems are marred by an awkward expository padding — as opposed to the delicate privacy of others. But these flaws cannot detract from the achievement of the whole.

WHAT makes Birthday Letters so compelling is not simply its narrative, the pull of its familiar details, but the intensity and quality of its imagery and the precision of Hughes's language. If I had to pick one outstanding poem, it would be "Daffodils", in which Hughes describes how, "In the rain of that April — your last April", the poets harvested the daffodils on their land. Hughes's onomatopoeic, alliterative, rhythmically alert language is startlingly evocative of the textures of the flowers: "the soft shrieks/Of their jostled stems, the wet shocks shaken/Of their girlish dance frocks — /Fresh-opened dragonflies, wet and flimsy,/ Opened too early." And now, "Every March since they have lifted again/ . . . They return to forget you stooping there".

This fresh vision, coupled with Hughes's tragic metaphors, makes Birthday Letters the most moving and vital book written by the greatest living English poet.

If you would like to order Birthday Letters at the special price of £12, contact CultureShop (see right)

Queen of the Groucho

Giles Foden

I Knew I Was Right: My Autobiography
by Julie Burchill
Heinemann 193pp £15.99

ANYONE mad enough to have spent time at London media hang-out (or drop-in centre) the Groucho Club during the past 10 years should read this book, in the spirit of care in the community as much as anything else. Lunatics were running the asylum, and in a godless universe they found their avatar in Julie Burchill, over whose particular Groucho sofa inevitably would be draped an array of dazzling creatures or, depending on your point of view, vile bodies.

Let's exhume a few of them. Here's Toby Young on the slab, the ambitious journalist who with Burchill co-founded the influential low-culture-for-highbrows paper, the Modern Review. Here's Tom Shone, film critic of the Sunday Times and, in Burchill's phrase, "the only man at the Groucho Club worth getting horizontal with". Here too, sometimes, are Burchill's second husband Cosmo Landesman, novelist Will Self, and reviewer Nicholas Lezard.

At some point in this scenario Charlotte Raven, an alluring young journalist, walks into the room and changes Burchill's life, which by her own account had been spinning out of control: booze, drugs, the ball-and-chain of a messy past. Raven swept her off her feet in a passionate love affair that precipitated a bust-up with Toby Young, who "torched" the Modern Review in revenge. Burchill, her reign as Queen of the Groucho over, fled to Brighton to build a new life.

If there was extravagant selfishness at Burchill's court, and monstrous vanity too, there was also talent. The success of her "group", partly riding on the huge expansion of print media, went hand in hand with their notoriety — and none was more successful or notorious than Burchill herself. She had the pedigree and money her younger followers desired. At 17 she had been writing for the New Musical Express, at 20 for the Face, at 23 for the Sunday Times, at 26 for the Mail on Sunday. In between she found time to write a tongue-in-cheek blockbuster novel, Ambition, and an acclaimed television drama about her father and their family dog, Prince: two bright spots in a troubled, sexually ambiguous, working class Bristol childhood.

Part confessional, part polemic — against men, against the middle class — the Burchill story proceeds at quite a lick. She is born into "the flaming crucible" of July 1959. Early youth sees her fighting at school, sulking at home, and performing "unspeakable acts of filth" on both boys and girls. Most of all, though, she reads; at the age of 12 she is, as she explains, "already hip to Nabokov and Graham Greene".

In many ways, this book represents itself as much as an apology to her parents as it does a love letter to Raven, whose name keeps popping up in unexpected places in the narrative, as if she were a parrot sitting on Burchill's shoulder while she writes.

You can't blame Burchill for wanting to escape. As she puts it: "The Bristol Sound — as Portishead would later demonstrate with their almost unbearably beautiful music — is the sound of sleep-walking, of a region which has historically been left, for good or ill, out of the North-South debate . . . Growing up there I felt totally isolated; an island on an island."

So Julie paddled her own canoe, answering an ad in the NME for a "hip young gunslinger" and thereby moving into the second phase of her life. Here she meets Tony Parsons. Hey presto, she marries him and goes to live in Billericay. It doesn't work. There's a bit of an ellipsis in this part of the narrative and one suspects that only a fraction of the true story has been told.

But it is not really the story that's interesting. It's the way it is told: how she writes, her magnificent energy. The rawness, the rub of that energy, is actually well conceived: it is that of the perceived and self-perceiving outsider who is really a secret adept, a hierophant. It is full of things she ought to eschew: rants, bum notes, too many capital letters, italics and exclamation marks.

But there's not much point in counselling restraint; that's not what Burchill is about. Nor, as she mostly brings it off when the devil is in her, should we complain about the nasty bits in this book — comments about the poor sexual performance of past husbands, for instance. It's all part of the package. But at the end the reader wants to draw out the poison — to tell her, take it easy, fix yourself a detox schedule. After all, we want you to last, Julie; the world needs the reflections of your maturer years.

New fiction

Lucy Atkins

Because They Wanted To, by Mary Gaitskill (Picador, £15.99)

GAITSKILL'S stories are downbeat, simple tales of missed opportunity, isolation and regret. She writes about single mothers, dentists, disaffected lesbians; resolutely ordinary people, each rooted in their own particular brand of loneliness. They all share a need for intimacy and Gaitskill portrays their frustration in lucid detail. Though the pieces could be more punchy, Gaitskill resists sensationalism and the uncomfortable emotions she unearths ring true.

Solomon Grundy, by Dan Gooch (Abacus, £9.99)

FOLLOWING the trajectory of the nursery rhyme, this tells the tale of a baby whose accelerated growth propels him, in the week from his birth, through babyhood, toddling, childhood, adolescence, marriage, homelessness and death. Into this bizarre, intermittently funny novel, Gooch squeezes all the juicy bits about growing up until, gradually, all the pathos and terror of a life lived out of control, however extreme, begins to seem disturbingly familiar. This is, essentially, an allegorical adventure story, written with a laddish sense of humour and a reckless disdain for realism.

Here on Earth, by Alice Hoffman (Chatto, £15.99)

WITHOUT embarrassment or heavy-handedness, Hoffman has successfully reworked Wuthering Heights, setting her tale in small-town America. When her childhood housekeeper dies, March leaves her husband in California and returns to her home town to sort out the estate. She is reunited with the love of her life, the mercurial Hollis. Their compulsive love and its destructive effects are set, one freezing winter, in a claustrophobic community ridden with secrets and feuds. An engrossing read.

The Red Hat, by John Bayley (Duckworth, £15.99)

A SUBTLE exploration of the impossibility of discovering the True Story. Nancy is a woman who resembles the Vermeer portrait, "Girl Wearing a Red Hat". In part one, she tells the story of her trip to see the painting. A man lets himself into her hotel room each night, and she is abducted by (possibly) Palestinian terrorists. Part two is narrated by an English academic who has read Nancy's account, is sceptical, but fascinated, and goes in search of Nancy and the True Story, which, of course, he won't uncover. Characters are cold and unlikeable, and the atmosphere rather lacklustre, but the questions thrown up by the clever plot maintain momentum.

Adèle by Mary Flanagan (Bloomsbury, £10.99)

THE beginning is certainly different: inquisitive feminist publisher Celia pinches from the British Museum what she believes to be a mummified clitoris. With Dia, an American academic, she tries to piece together a crime carried out 60 years previously when a gynaecologist discovered an alluring teenager, prostituted her and gave her a clitoridectomy. Surprises ensure in this engrossing tale of sexual desire.

Blair today, Gordon tomorrow? How did Brown come second in a race he should have won?

He who hesitates is lost

Michael White

Gordon Brown: The Biography
by Paul Routledge
Simon & Schuster 359pp £17.99

GUESS who penned the following earnest passage. "We should and must have a strong and reliable government, to promote our interests in Europe and the world. In Britain too, we must have less casual government that must take drastic measures in solving our unemployment, economic, transport and local government problems . . . ".

All right, since this is a book about Gordon Brown, it was obviously the future chancellor. But you will not guess when and where he wrote it — in April 1963 for the Kirkcaldy High School Gazette, which raised money for good causes. At the time young Gordon was just 12.

Amid the rash of "Tony betrayed Gordon" headlines, which sprang from Paul Routledge's enjoyable biography, it is this aspect of Brown's career which will come as the biggest surprise to most readers. It is also the best part of the book.

Even allowing for the hyperbole of friends and family pride, the Rev Dr John Brown's middle son appears to have been prodigiously precocious. Five As at Higher level when he was 15, off to Edinburgh university at 16, there to discover that a final game of rugby against Kirkcaldy old boys back in Fife had detached his retina.

Only prolonged medical care prevented him losing his sight in both eyes. Imagine, two Blunketts in the Blair cabinet, for it is clear that blindness would not have held young Gordon back. By 21 he was the university's best-known student politician: he thrashed the veteran industrialist, Sir Fred Catherwood, in a famous election to become Rector, then fought the reactionary principal, Sir Michael Swann (later BBC chairman), to a standstill. Still only 47, Chancellor Brown has, in effect, been a public figure for 30 years.

Compare this with Tony Blair's Oxford career: all rock music and girls. Blair remains an outsider in the Labour tribe, whereas Brown is steeped in it. Yet it was the London lawyer, not his senior colleague in the Westminster class of '83, who went on to win the ultimate prize. Why? A wily reporter of the old school (he describes wheedling a scoop out of a union leader "somewhere about the fifth or sixth bottle of wine . . ."), Routledge is an unabashed Old Labour fan of Brown. He decided to write this book when he watched the shadow chancellor not pulling rank at last year's funeral of Jimmy Airlie, the Clydeside union legend. Fortunately, he is too bloody-minded to write hagiography.

Despite being partisan-chippy — claiming Blair's "tough on crime" soundbite and much else as Brown's ideas — Routledge tells us a lot, but not quite as he intends. Authorised biography or no, this is very much the Browning Version: as soon as John Smith died the Blairites moved quickly to launch Tony, with Peter Mandelson switching sides, leaving loyal, bereaved Gordon standing. Brown "felt let down" on their earlier understanding that he should be the modernisers' candidate.

Routledge claims Brown could have beaten Blair, but only by smashing him as the London Establishment candidate, thereby badly damaging Labour's election chances. Is all that true? No. It was instantly obvious to the hard-nosed that Blair, not Brown, was the Scots candidate with broader Middle England appeal. A de facto Englishman with a Geordie seat, he was the family man with the outgoing grin, in contrast to Brown's apparently dour intensity, his solitary habits and disorganised style. Blair would still have won.

Shy, but "not dour at all", corrects Lorna Snodgrass, his first teenage girlfriend. Now that is true. Privately Brown can be a delight, wittier and warmer than Blair. A cool customer is Tony, but he staked his claim while Brown fatally hesitated.

Politics is littered with such decisive moments. It may not be too fanciful to detect a similar hesitation in our (deeply romantic) hero's reluctance to marry that long succession of girlfriends, princesses, presenters and PR girls, all faithfully listed here. Good luck, Sarah Macaulay!

Two other points are worth making. One is that student Brown has indeed modified his youthful left-wing fervour, but he is still recognisibly the same Gordon, carrying from his father's pulpit what Routledge calls "an underlying sense of goodness and altruism" into politics. Europe, stable growth and low inflation, welfare-to-work, education, education and still more education — most of his austere preoccupations have been there since Kirkcaldy High, along with a very Scottish sense of social justice.

Routledge details Brown's running economic battles with Blair, John Prescott and his old Edinburgh rival, Robin Cook (they fell out over devolution in 1978), without shedding much new light on such crucial rows as the 50p tax rate or last autumn's fuss over the euro. In policy terms he may yet be proved wrong, of course, damagingly deflationary if the much-vaunted global economy falters.

If so, his lingering hopes of eventually succeeding Blair will disappear. But he remains what Ken Livingstone calls a man of socialist instinct. He has also had much the better of the arguments so far. If the privatised Blackpool tram squashed Tony Blair tomorrow, Brown would get the vacancy. And he would deserve it.

If you would like a copy of this book at the special price of £14, contact CultureShop (see ad on page 28)

Snappy relationships

Tom McCarthy

Alligator Playground
by Alan Sillitoe
Flamingo 227pp £16.99

ALAN SILLITOE has always had a knack for crafting allegorical landscapes, representations in miniature of the universe around him. In his story "Noah's Ark", published almost 40 years ago, a Nottingham funfair becomes a kind of medieval *mappa mundi* — full of illusions which are cheap yet still, for many, unaffordable, crowned by a giant wheel that gives its passengers a tantalising glimpse of the whole show before it plunges them to earth again. His most famous story, "The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner", turns a cross-country track into a spiritual and social battlefield on which the individual will is pitted against the forces that would tame it.

In his recent autobiography, Life Without Armour, he describes how, as a child hemmed in by poverty and brutalised by an alcoholic and illiterate father, he would spend hours playing with miniature soldiers and poring over an atlas that "became my talisman, the locality I was locked in having all the characteristics of a powerhouse which would one day lead me to more ease of living".

With this tendency to topographic conceit in mind, it's tempting to see the origins of Sillitoe's latest collection of short stories as lying in the Malay archipelago to which he was posted as a wireless operator soon after the war. When not guiding planes to land or messaging God to ask "how the universe had been made and how far it was to the end of it", Sillitoe and a friend built a boat which sank and stranded them on a small island. They would have swum back, but their map informed them that they'd washed up in the middle of "Alligator Shoal".

In the new book, the shoal becomes a "playground", the playground an extended metaphor for human relationships: they're vicious and carnivorous, full of toothy smiles at the beginning, tailing off towards the end.

The metaphor's proponent is Norman Bakewell, a northern writer and the scourge of well-heeled Hampstead literati. Its main protagonist is Tom (we're never told his last name; one suspects that, to some extent, we're being treated to a *roman-à-clef*). Bakewell's thirty-



Sillitoe: stories of tenderness and rapaciousness PHOTO: GRAHAM GOUGH

something publisher and a serial adulterer. In Calvino-like fashion, Sillitoe has Bakewell write a novel in which the hero is himself a publisher who has an affair with the daughter of the woman for whom his wife has left him.

Tom meanwhile acts out his author's plotline — give or take a generation here, an extra betrayal there. The *mise-en-scène* could be vacuous but isn't, as the layering allows Sillitoe to talk through several channels, constructing a harmonious vision of discordance as a psychic condition, detailing its sado-masochistic social ramifications. It also lets the author, the real author, figure as both Prospero, the masterful creator, and as Caliban, the obnoxious boor who collapses, drunk, at parties.

Surprisingly for someone who's been writing for so long, Sillitoe runs into basic formal difficulties, shifting point of view between characters without warning, often with disastrous results. One of the pieces, "Ivy", is presented as a childhood memoir delivered by a now-adult narrator. When the point of view suddenly shifts to the narrator's aunt, the whole convention crashes, and the narrative is lost in confusion.

On the whole, though, these are fine short stories, capturing the tenderness as well as the rapaciousness of short and long-term relationships. The tenderness is most apparent in the short piece "Battlefields", in which a seemingly bullying husband turns out to be desperately urging his wife into recovery from a recent stroke; and in "Holiday", in which the protagonist prowls round an Egyptian hotel, imagining floods bringing alligators' cousins, crocodiles, in from the Nile, yet sublimating his lustful fantasies and sharing them with his partner for their mutual amusement. Alligators, after all, have mates.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Pig haven in back gardens

Paul Evans

TELEVISION, radio and newspapers in Britain were recently much taken by the story of two pigs that escaped from an abattoir. The pigs, dubbed the Tamworth Two because they were of the ginger-haired Tamworth breed, managed to escape from the abattoir, burrow under a fence, swim a flooded river, hide in gardens and evade capture by both the authorities and journalists for several days. They were rewarded with celebrity status, offers of safekeeping and assurances that their bid for freedom had earned them the right not to be turned into bacon.

Two pigs on the run for so long, hiding in gardens while in the full glare of the media spotlight, is remarkable. But gardens are great places for animals that want to be left in peace. And as we make deeper inroads into the countryside, more wild animals are forced to turn to gardens for sanctuary.

This is happening with roe deer, whose numbers have been growing while their woodland habitat has been declining. They are being pushed into suburban gardens in northern English towns, where concern about the spread of Lyme disease, traffic accidents and garden damage is already leading to the inevitable calls for culling the deer.

But we are not yet at the same point as North American cities where, as in Cincinnati, white-tailed deer are hunted in suburban backyards by people with crossbows. Nor do we have urban coyotes hunting cats, as they do in Washington State.

The British Trust for Ornithology released the findings of its Garden Bird Feeding Survey at the end of last year. The survey has been running for 27 years, based on observations of bird tables in 247 gardens in the country, as well as in suburban and urban areas. The results show that suburban gardens now record a wider range of species than country ones, thanks to harmful agricultural practices. Species such as the long-tailed tit and goldfinch are new to the suburbs, and the trend for less common birds to seek refuge in urban and suburban gardens is continuing.

However, most animal garden fugitives are much smaller than pigs, deer, coyotes or birds. For those with a trainspotter's propensity for species lists, gardens can be the Crewe railway stations of nature.

In 1988 Peter Miotk designed and planted a naturalistic garden, based on a wide range of habitats, in Weidenbach, in arable countryside 40km southwest of the German town of Nuremberg. Eight years later he counted 700 animal species in the garden. This included 23 per cent of all Bavarian breeding birds, 17 per cent of butterfly species, 15 per cent of coccinellid (ladybird) beetles, 18 per cent of wasps, 23 per cent of dragonflies and so on.

Remarkably, one in eight of these species is listed in the Red Data Book of endangered animals in Bavaria. Miotk believes that the true figure for species using his garden — those not yet recorded or just passing through — is likely to be around 3,000.

In Britain, Jennifer Owen's garden in Leicester has almost 1,800 recorded animal taxa. Although she insists that her garden is "nothing special, just a bit more overgrown and lush than most", Dr Owen has recorded new species, particularly of parasitic ichneumon wasps, that are unknown in England outside her garden. Is the presence of rare species a result of Dr Owen's special management of her garden? "Not at all," she says, "it's because nobody looks hard enough." Good news for garden fugitives everywhere.

Chess Leonard Barden

***DECEMBER'S* Fide knockout world championship at Groningen was the setting for an impressive British success, while the Russians and Americans were eclipsed. Michael Adams beat Nigel Short 4-3 in an epic semi-final where both missed wins, then Adams drew eight times with the world number three Vishy Anand before going down 4-5 after a five-minute blitz game in which he missed a clear chance (see this week's puzzle below). Anand then went on to the Olympic Museum at Lausanne to challenge Anatoly Karpov, who was unfairly given a special seeding, for the Fide title. Karpov won the match 5-3 and may meet Garry Kasparov in a unifying title match later this year.**

Earlier at Groningen, it looked like the familiar tale of ex-Soviet domination as their players took 12 of the last 16 places. But the Russian phalanx was wiped out by the semi-finals. In this game, Short needed to win to stay alive in a two-game mini-match, and responded with the most elegant win of the championship.

Short-Belyavsky

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Re8 Karpov used to play this solid formation, inviting 10 Ng5 Rf8 11 Nf3 with repetition, when he was satisfied to draw against a weaker opponent, so it's a sensible choice in this game.

10 d4 Bb7 11 Nbd2 Bf8 12 d5 White often keeps the tension by 12 a4 h6 13 Bc2 exd4 14 cxd4 Nb4 15 Bb1. **Nb8 13 Nf1 Nbd7 14 N3h2**

White's plan is N3g4 and if Nxg4 fxg4! followed soon by Ne3, g3, Kg2, Rh1 and threats to the BK. So Black now tries to free his congested Q-side, but this in turn opens up the light squares for White's bishops and knights with deadly effect later in the game.

c6 15 dxc6 Bxc6 16 Bg5 Qc7 17 Qf3 Qb7 18 Ng3 d5 19 Ng4! dxe4 20 Qf5 Nd5 Black is struggling. Nxg4 allows mate in two while if Be7 21 Nh5! 21 Nxe4 Nd5 22 Rad1 h5 If Rae8 23 Rd3 (ideas Red1 and Rf3) N7b6 24 Ngf6+! gxf6 25 Nxf6+ Nxf6 26 Bxf6 Nf4 27 Rg3+ Ng6 28 Rxg6+ and mates.

23 Ne3 Nf4 Hoping for 24 Bxe6? fxe6 trapping the queen, but Short has seen much further. **24 Bxf4 Bxe4 25 Rxd7! Bxf5** If Qxd7 26 Qxe4 attacks both black rooks. **26 Rxb7 exf4 27 Rxf7! Resigns.** A thematic finish to White's pirouettes on the central white squares. If Kxf7 28 Nxf5 or fxe3 28 Rxf5 or Bg6 28 Rxf4 Bf7 29 Rxf7! gains decisive material.

No 2508

Vishy Anand v Michael Adams, 9th game, Groningen 1997. After 19 hours of play and eight draws, they were playing sudden-death, five-minute games. Adams (Black, to move) had a rocky start and now, with his queen attacked, went 1 ... Qg5 2 Qe1 Qe7 3 Qa5 Bb6 4 Qa3 Qxa3 5 Rxa3 when Anand's passed c6 pawn proved too strong. What did Black miss during this sequence?

No 2507: 1 ... Rf3 2 Rf1 Rxg3 3 Qd1! Qxc5 4 Be6+ Kh8 5 Qxc2 and White won with his extra knight.

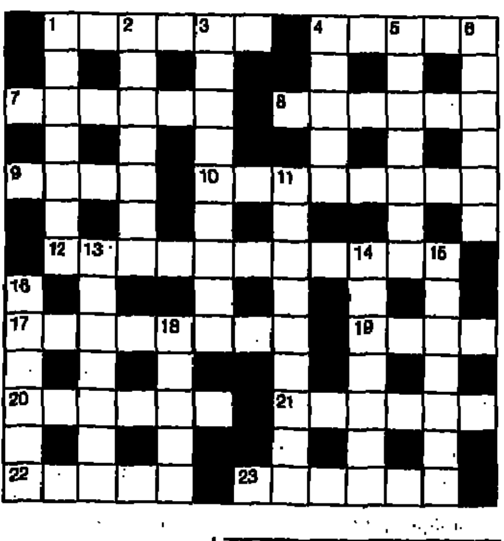
Quick crossword no. 403

Across

1 Trim — tree (6)
4 Passage (5)
7 Column (6)
8 College grounds (6)
9 Volcano (4)
10 Beach (8)
12 Worsen (11)
17 Outcast (6)
19 Certain (4)
20 River — virago (6)
21 Elaborate (6)
22 Faithful (5)
23 Sanctuary (6)

Down

1 Pompous (7)
2 Confident (7)
3 Bottle-opener (9)
4 Accumulate (5)
5 Stay — second (7)
6 Christian festival (6)
11 Nameless (9)
13 Bliss (7)
14 Football club — magazine
15 Misprint (7)
16 Write illegibly (6)
18 Coral isle (5)



Last week's solution

TYRANNICAL / PROGRESS / TRUE / DAME / PRECISE / MUNIFICENCE / STRATUM / NUMB / FOIL / INITIATE / STRENGTHEN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

***THE* past month has seen two tournaments, most recently the Macallan International Pairs Championship, which was staged at the White House Hotel in London's Regents Park.**

With young lions such as Norway's Geir Helgemo threatening to capture all the titles around, the old guard (sadly, that includes me these days!) decided to fight back. Before the Macallan, I played in the Cap Gemini tournament in Holland with Tony Forrester; at the Macallan I paired his long-time partner in the British team, Andrew Robson.

Their styles are very different, but equally effective — Forrester is a natural player, quick-thinking and highly aggressive, while Robson is more deliberate and relies on superb technique. Apart from hoping to do well with both of them, I announced to both that I will finally resolve the question of which is the better player.

My theory was that if I played my normal erratic game with each of them, our results in the two tournaments would be answer enough. Over the next couple of weeks, I'll let you know what happened!

Tony is well known for his forceful personality (some might use a different adjective), but one way or another he always leaves his mark on the opponents. This is a recent example. At game all, Tony picked up this hand:

♠Q63 ♥AKQ976543
♦4 ♣None

What would be your opening bid as dealer?

I imagine that most of you would choose the straightforward four hearts, though some might select one heart or a semi-tactical strong two hearts. Nothing so mundane for Forrester, who passed!

This is not as silly as it seems — it's the kind of manoeuvre that can often earn a swing. Someone is bound to have enough to open the bidding, as there's almost certain to be a lot of distribution around, and the opponents may misjudge the situation when you enter the auction at a later stage. This was what happened:

North
♠ K54
♥ 8
♦ KJ982
♣ 7643

West
♠ A10
♥ J2
♦ A103
♣ AK1098

East
♠ J872
♥ 10
♦ Q765
♣ QJ52

South
♠ Q63
♥ AKQ976543
♦ 4
♣ None

South	West	North	East
Tony			
Pass	1NT	Pass	Pass
4♥	Dble	Pass	Pass
Rdble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West opened with a strong no trump, and when the passed hand on his right leapt to four hearts, he must have thought that Christmas had arrived. But four hearts redoubled made with an overtrick. West learned two painful lessons: first, beware experts bearing gifts; second, there are few sights in the bridge world more terrible than Forrester's expression after he has just made a redoubled contract.

Rugby Union Tetley's Bitter Cup fifth round: Bath 17 Richmond 29 (aet; 14-14 at 80 minutes)

Bath bitter pill for Brive encounter

Robert Armstrong

BATH began the countdown to the Heineken European Cup final against Brive in Bordeaux in sombre mood after crashing out of the Tetley's Bitter Cup far more tamely than the scoreline might suggest.

Andy Robinson promised he would not shirk tough decisions over team selection for the most important match in the club's history. Yet the Bath coach must be aware that sweeping changes at this stage are unlikely to transform an average side into European champions.

Indeed Richmond, shrewdly organised and hungry for success, better represented the best in contemporary English rugby, showing an all-round dynamism to which Bath ultimately had no answer. It was reflected in Richmond's three tries to one.

Bath, 10 times the cup winners, made cardinal errors, losing the ball in contact, succumbing naively in the line-outs and getting penalised at attacking scrums. French observers in the stand must have been agreeably surprised by the lack of passion, firepower and adaptability.

"Our main problems were ball retention and sustaining the pace for 80 minutes," admitted Robinson. "Richmond read our game well and regularly crossed the gain-line through their big runners. Scott Quinnell and Rolando Martin made the hard yards and it was easy for their guys to score. We are bitterly disappointed and we have some serious talking to do."

No player will come back to haunt Bath more than the Richmond lock Craig Gillies, released by them in early autumn. He towered above the line-out, time and again intercepting the Bath throw-in by Mark Regan and delivering a steady supply of good ball which allowed Richmond to punch damaging holes through the back row or the midfield, where Allan Bateman was always on red alert.

Bath also struggled to lay hands on the Richmond wings Jim Fallon, another former Bath player, and Dominic Chapman, whose elusive skills must have impressed the England coach Clive Woodward. Ireland and England have both invited Chapman to attend squad sessions.

After Adedayo Adebayo streaked home from near halfway for a first-half try, Fallon, with help from Chapman, held off an Ieuan Evans tackle soon after the interval to put his side 14-8 ahead.

Late on, Mike Catt profited from heavy Bath pressure, kicking two short-range penalty goals which granted the home side an extra roll of the dice. However, early in extra-time Chapman knifed through the Bath defence and side-stepped Evans before touching down near the posts. Catt replied with his fourth penalty goal. Bath, in search of fresh impetus, threw on Richard Butland at fly-half, but Richmond were not to be denied, finishing in confident style with a penalty goal by Adrian Davies and a superb try by Steve Cottrell in the left corner.

Other fifth-round encounters saw holders Leicester knocked out by Saracens 14-13 in a match in which Leicester seemed determined to prevent the opposition playing rather than opening up the game themselves. Wasps saw off Fylde 34-8 and Newcastle beat Worcester 10-0. There were also easy victories for West Hartlepool, Northampton, London Irish and Sale.

● In their international against Italy at Treviso, Scotland twice blew a nine-point lead to go down 25-21.

Holding the high ground: Leicester's Fritz van Heerden rises to the occasion to collect during a line-out against Saracens PHOTO: RICHARD SAKER

Tennis Australian Open

Rusedski serves up dire fare

Stephen Bierley in Melbourne

THE rain came too late for Greg Rusedski. Last Sunday's play at the Australian Open, after a fierce overnight electrical storm and residual drizzle, was reduced to a mere six matches, all on the Centre Court with its roof closed.

In effect the tournament became an indoor event, which might have suited the British No 1 extremely well against Australia's Todd Woodbridge. Rusedski's two victories over him had both been indoors, where the balls fly quicker and the courts are slicker.

As it was, the retractable roof was wide open for their third-round match last Saturday. But shutters of a different kind closed in over Rusedski. Seeded No 5, he was the main man left in his quarter of the draw and appeared to have a glorious opportunity of reaching the semi-finals. But he lost 7-6, 6-4, 6-2, and without in the least doing himself justice.

His coach, Tony Pickard, could find no satisfactory reason for Rusedski's sudden loss of form. "He said it was not nerves, but it has happened twice now: here and in Doha. It did not happen during the indoor season."

But the shock of the tournament was the defeat of the world No 1 and defending champion, Pete Sampras, who had appeared invulnerable despite a sore back. He had beaten the Moroccan left-hander Hicham Arazi in straight sets to reach the quarter-finals. Simple.

But then he met the Slovakian Karol Kucera, ranked 20 in the world, who continued an amazing run of 14 wins out of 15 matches on Australian soil by breaking Sampras's opening serve and going on to win in four sets, 6-4, 6-2, 6-7, 6-3.

Sampras denied Petr Korda, who beat him in the US Open last year, the opportunity of a return match in the semi-finals after Korda came back from two sets down to beat the No 4 seed, Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden.

Only two women's matches were played last Sunday, with the unseeded Venus Williams striding through her fourth-round match against Patty Schnyder of Switzerland 6-4, 6-1. Williams was then beaten by her fellow American Lindsay Davenport, the No 2 seed, in three sets — 1-6, 7-5, 6-3.

In the semi-finals Davenport was due to meet Spain's Conchita Martinez, who beat France's Sandrine Testud in straight sets. The defending champion Martina Hingis and Mary Pierce were to meet in the quarter-finals with the winner due to play either Arantxa Sanchez Vicario or Anke Huber of Germany.

However, none of the women's matches had the intensity of the weekend clash of the teenagers, when the Russian Anna Kournikova, aged 16, fought long and hard before losing 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 to Hingis.

Super Bowl

Glory at last for Elway

Mark Tran in San Diego

JOHN ELWAY, the golden oldie of quarterbacks, can now retire on a high note after leading the Denver Broncos to a glorious 31-24 upset of the Green Bay Packers and shattering a long, winning streak by National Football Conference sides.

Elway hobbled to the post-game interview, dropping hints that Super Bowl XXXII might have been his swansong after 15 spectacular years.

"I want to sit down with my family, my wife, see how my body heals and we'll see," said a relieved and quietly jubilant Elway on his fourth attempt to win the Super Bowl. At 37, Elway, who was carried off the field by his team-mates, is the oldest quarterback to win the Vince Lombardi trophy.

The Broncos won mainly because of the speedy running of Terrell Davis, easy victor of the most valuable player title. Davis, rushing behind a light but superb offensive line, wreaked havoc on the Packers by repeatedly dashing to the outside and turning the corner upfield. He set a new rushing record for the whole season with 2,331 yards, breaking Eric Dickerson's tally of 2,122.

The underrated Denver defence played its part, bolting up Dorsey Levens on the ground and keeping close tabs on Green Bay's speedy receivers.

The game was everything the fans, the NFL and the TV networks would have wished for. Momentum swung back and forth, the underdogs won, and Elway got his fairy-tale ending.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Clough accused of taking backhanders

THE Football Association have brought charges against Brian Clough, Ronnie Fenton, Steve Burtenshaw and Nottingham Forest in connection with the inquiry into irregular payments, or "bungs". Its long-awaited verdict came more than four years after the probe was commissioned by the Premier League which made public the resulting report's recommendations last year. The FA took legal advice before deciding on taking action.

Clough, the former Forest manager, was accused of pocketing part of a $76,000 backhander from the transfer of Anthony Loughlan and Neil Lyne from Leicester United to Forest in 1989. He denied the charge and said he was taking legal advice.

Fenton, Clough's former assistant manager at Forest, was charged with the same offence, plus taking part of an alleged $75,000 bung from the transfer of Alf Inge Haaland from Bryne to Forest in 1992.

Burtenshaw, the former Arsenal chief scout, now at Queens Park Rangers, was charged with accepting a $58,000 bung from the transfer of John Jensen from Brondby to Arsenal in 1992. Forest themselves were charged with making payments outside FA rules and charged with misconduct in failing to supervise their employees properly. All the accused were given 14 days to respond to the charges before an FA disciplinary hearing.

MICHAEL LYNAGH is to retire from Rugby Union at the end of the current season. The Australian fly-half, who played for his country in three World Cups, retired from the international stage in 1995 after setting a scoring record of 911 points in 72 Tests. Lynagh, aged 34, now plays for Saracens and has made a big contribution to their rise to second place in the Allied Dunbar Premiership. He said: "It is not a decision that I made lightly. Rugby has given me more than I could ever give back."

KEVIN YATES remains in England's squad for the Five Nations Championship in spite of being suspended by Bath in the wake of ear-biting allegations. Coach Clive Woodward is sticking with the 24 players he named earlier, although Yates will stay away from the squad's practice as he faces an inquiry by Bath on February 3. London Scottish's Australian star Simon Fenn allegedly had part of his ear bitten off during their match with Bath last month.

JOE CALZAGHE of Wales stopped Croatia's Branco Sobot in the third round to retain his World Boxing Organisation super-middleweight title in Cardiff.

ENGLAND'S second and final match before this week's first Test against the West Indies meandered gently to a draw. The visitors, playing against West Indies A at Kingston, declared on 400-8, Nasser Hussain contributing a gritty 159. The home side replied with 434 (Roland Holder 183). Mike Atherton's declaration at 181 for four in the second innings brought an early finish to the match with England 147 ahead.

GEOFFREY BOYCOTT, the former England Test batsman, was sentenced to a three-month suspended jail term and fined $8,000 by a court in Grasse, southern France, for assaulting his former lover, Margaret Moore, hitting her 20 times and leaving her with two black eyes.

Football results

FA CUP
Fourth round: Aston Villa 4, WBA 0; Birminghm 2, Stockport 1; Cardiff 1, Reading 1; Charlton 1, Wolves 1; Coventry 2, Derby Co 0; Crystal Pal 3, Leicester 0; Huddersfld 0, Wimbledon 1; Ipswich 1, Sheff Utd 1; Leeds 2, Grimsby 0; Man Utd 5, Walsall 1; Middlesbro 1, Arsenal 2; Sheff Wed 0, Blackburn 3; Tottenham 1, Barnsley 1; Tranmere 1, Sunderland 0.

FA CUP: Fifth-round draw: Aston Villa v Coventry City; West Ham Utd v Blackburn; Leeds Utd v Birmingham City; Stevenage Boro or Newcastle Utd v Tranmere Rovers; Wimbledon v Charlton Athletic or Wolves; Manchester Utd v Tottenham Hotspur or Barnsley; Arsenal v Crystal Palace; Ipswich or Sheff Utd v Cardiff or Reading.
Ties to be played weekend of February 14.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Bradford 1, Swindon 1; Oxford 1, Portsmth 0; Port Vale 2, Crewe 3; QPR 0, Nottm For 1.

Division Two: Bournemth 0, Oldham 0; Brentford 1, Watford 2; Bristol City 0, Northmptn 0; Burnley 1, Southend 0; Carlisle 3, Bristol R 1; Luton 1, Fulham 4; Plymouth 3, Wigan 2; Preston 0, Chesterfld 0; Wycombe 2, Blackpool 1; York 2, Millwall 3.

Division Three: Barnet 3, Colchester 2; Brighton 1, Scarboro 1; Cambridge 1, Chester 2; Darlington 3, Exeter 2; Doncaster 0, Macclesfld 3; Hartlepool 0, Rotherham 0; Hull 3, Peterboro 1; Lincoln 3, Notts Co 5; Rochdale 0, Leyton O 2; Sc'thorpe 1, Swansea 0; Torquay 3, Shrewsbry 0.

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP:
Third round: Airdrie 2, Ross Co 2; Alloa 0, Ayr 3; Celtic 2, Morton 0; Dumbarton 1, Motherwell 1; Dunfmline 7, Edinburgh C 2; Dundee U 1, Aberdeen 0; Hamilton 1, Rangers 2; Hearts 2, Clydebank 0; Hibernian 1, Raith 2; Livingston 3, Albion 3; Queen Sth 1, Stirling A 3; Stenhsmr 1, Falkirk 3; St Johnstn 1, Partick 0; Stranraer 0, Kilmarnk 2; Invrnss CT 6, Annan Athletic 1.